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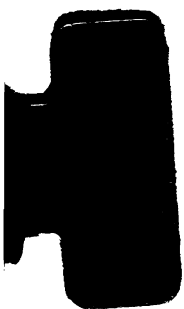
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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE

OF

JOSEPH-OCTAVE PLESSIS

BISHOP OF QUEBEC



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Published by G. & G. E. Desbarats.

JOSEPH-OCTAVE PLESSIS

CATHOLIC BISHOP OF QUEBEC.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE

OF

JOSEPH-OCTAVE PLESSIS

BISHOP OF QUEBEC

TRANSLATED BY T. B. FRENCH

FROM THE ORIGINAL BY L'ABBÉ FERLAND, PUBLISHED IN THE
FOYER CANADIEN

QUEBEC
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P R E F A C E .

BY THE TRANSLATOR.



The great educational efforts of the Seminaries and Colleges of Lower Canada for the last half century, are abundantly testified, at the present moment, by the number and activity of their old pupils presenting themselves in the periodicals of the day, as candidates for literary fame.

History, biography, poetry, fiction, and even the fine arts, have each now in Lower Canada their shrine, with devotees, whose offerings are characterized by no mean talent.

Their fellow countrymen seem to welcome this dawn of a new epoch in their literary history with a national pride and gratitude, and to accord their efforts a hearty encouragement.

"*Le Foyer Canadien*" or "The Canadian Hearth," and "*Les Soirées Canadiennes*" or "Canadian Evenings," are the two most popular serials, in which the old people are hastening, as it were, to deposit the traditions handed down to them,—as well as their own interesting reminiscences of the habits,

customs and old lyrics of their forefathers,—to preserve them for the future use of the historian. While the younger generation are contributing through the same channels, their songs, based on more classic models, and their stories of every day life, often full of practical and enlightened instruction. *

But added to these sources of literary supply, are to be found contributions from men of the highest literary pretensions, and upon subjects of such general interest and usefulness, as to call for a translation for the purpose of diffusion beyond the limits of Lower Canada.

The Abbe Ferland,† professor of history in the University of Laval, a learned and popular writer of much ability, has, during the last year, given a series of articles to "*Le Foyer Canadien*," constituting collectively a memoir of Monseigneur Plessis, Bishop of Quebec.

This brief but interesting memoir, as translated in the following pages, shows that Monseigneur Plessis was one of those gifted men, who combined with transcendent talent those eminent virtues to which men in all ages have universally agreed to accord their homage. Mgr. Plessis would have been great in any walk of life—whether as an administrator, a soldier, a lawyer or a divine.

* Jean Rivard, by A. G.-Lajoie.

† The Abbe is now engaged upon an elaborate history of Canada.

Everything that falls from his pen or his lips bears the stamp of genius ; nothing could be more tenderly eloquent than his letter of consolation to the burnt out Ursuline Nuns of Three Rivers,—nothing more inspiring than his addresses to the Militia,—nothing more masterly and conclusive than the logic and equity displayed in his memorial presented to the British Government on the civil and religious rights of his fellow countrymen.

A life of Mgr. Plessis is a record of the most stirring and important events in the history of Canada. It was long a question after the cession of the Province by France to England, whether the cruel persecutions practised in Ireland should be repeated on their co-religionists of “ New France.”

At the very period that men illustrious as statesmen and warriors were sent to govern conquered India, with instructions to respect the obscene and inhuman rites of the Hindoo,—the destinies of Canada were at times committed to men whose blind audacity led them to believe that they could suppress both the language and religion of the descendants of the most polished and sensitive race known to civilization ; a language which every Court in Europe had substituted for its own, a religion that had been illustrated by the unrivalled discourses of Bossuet, Bourdaloue and Massillon ; discourses so free from

polemics, so impregnated with sublime truths, that no instructed infidel could read without emotion, and no sincere christian of whatever sect without veneration.

The small oligarchy of that day, formed of men holding patented offices of the Crown and irresponsible to the people, seriously proposed to renew, in Canada, the tyranny of the 1st Charles : to confiscate the property of the subject, in order that they might govern the colony without resorting to the will of the people as expressed by their representatives.

Against this injustice Mgr. Plessis opposed himself with the whole force of his powerful and active mind. Strange as it may sound to the protestant ear in Canada, taught to believe that toleration is confined to the narrowest sectarian limits, Mgr. Plessis, through his whole life struggle, was the great champion of constitutional freedom—of toleration and of civil and religious liberty. Throughout this memoir, he is constantly found to be enunciating those great constitutional axioms which have formed the principles of every leading Reformer, from Hampden down to Sir James McIntosh, Lord Holland and Joseph Hume ; and it was by the aid and advocacy of these last named statesmen that the liberties of the Canadians were ultimately assured.

He warred against the principle of making the interests of the multitude subservient to the benefit

of the few. He preached and practised the staunchest loyalty and good faith to the Crown ; but exacted loyalty and good faith in return—he spurned all bribes, though often reduced to the narrowest straits.

Instead of being obnoxious to the old charge made against the catholic system, of keeping the people in ignorance, he was untiring in his efforts to extend a most liberal education to the masses. “ Yes, enlarge your scale, aim at a more extended education,” these were his instructions to his clergy.

With indomitable courage, perseverance and an irreproachable life, it is not difficult to understand how such a man would unite the interests and wield the whole strength of his fellow countrymen, thwart his opponents at every turn, and sink to rest crowned with success and victory.

T. B. F.



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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE
OF
MONSEIGNEUR JOSEPH OCTAVE PLESSIS,
BISHOP OF QUÉBEC.

FIRST PART.

I

Joseph Octave Plessis was born at Montreal, on the 3rd March, 1763, about the time that Canada was definitely ceded to England by the French.

His parents, respectable artizans, had preserved the old type of simplicity, of honesty and of attachment to religious duties, which distinguished the old French families of the middle class, in the Colony of la Nouvelle France. Loyal, virtuous and clever in his calling, Joseph Plessis-Belair, father of the future Bishop, had acquired a certain ease, by his industry, and by the order he maintained in his house. His ancestors arrived in this Country about the beginning of the 18th century, and fixed their residence in the immediate neighbourhood of Montreal, at a place now known by the name of the Tanneries of Belair.

Louise Ménard, the wife of Louis Plessis, was one of those christian women that make the happiness of a family, and whose lessons and example, leave such a salutary influence in the hearts of their children.

The Gallic blood, which ran in the veins of young Plessis, had also a small mixture of British blood ; for one of his grandmothers, of the name of French, was born in New England. When very young, she was carried off with two of her sisters by the Iroquois of the Sault-Saint-Louis. Two of the poor captives were placed and raised in families at Montreal, and were married to Canadians : the third, adopted by an Iroquois chief, took the language, the costume and the habits of the Iroquois women of her village, but she would never consent to marry, either with an Indian or a Frenchman. †

Raised in the bosom of such a christian family as that of Joseph Plessis, young Joseph Octave, could receive nothing but examples of order, regularity and virtue. Every evening the children and the apprentices were gathered round the elders of the house, joining in prayer, reciting their beads and listening to a lecture of piety. The apprentices, always selected for their character and morals, were treated as children

† Mgr. Plessis relates that he went sometimes to say Mass at the village where his Aunt lived. From the Sacristy, he could see the Indians as they entered the Chapel before the service, ranging themselves, the men on one side and the women on the other. It was difficult to perceive their features which were partly covered. But he could always recognize his Aunt, whose tall figure and European walk, distinguished her from her companions.

The late Mr. Daveluy, formerly old curé of Lotbinière, was a grandson of one of the ladies who bore the name of French. In fact, a great number of Canadian families, reckoned among their ancestors, the daughters of English families captured by Indians domiciled near Montreal and at Saint-François-du-Lac. These were always respected by the christian warriors when captured, and ordinarily adopted into Canadian families. Sometimes however, they preferred remaining among the Iroquois women whom they were accustomed to regard as their mothers or sisters.

When Deerfield, a town in Massachusetts, was taken by Hertel in 1704, the Indians and the Canadians who accompanied him, made a great many prisoners, and among others the Minister of the place, Williams and many of his children. In 1706, Williams and 57 other English prisoners obtained their liberty with permission to return to Deerfield. Eunice, however, one of the daughters of Williams, had been adopted by one of the Iroquois families of the Sault, and had become a catholic. In spite of the solicitations of her parents, she refused to leave the village, and some years after, married an Iroquois. Eunice visited her parents in New England from time to time ; but she persisted in retaining the Iroquois costume and in telling her beads, to the great annoyance of her two brothers, who had become Ministers themselves. From Eunice Williams, was descended the eccentric Eleazar Williams, who though born at the Sault-Saint-Louis, pretended nevertheless to be the son of Louis XVI.

of the house, and their conduct was watched, with the greatest care. Once a month, in company with their master and his two sons Joseph and Louis, they resorted to the church for confession, and it was under the eyes of their master that they assisted at the offices of the church on Sundays and fete days. On her part Madame Plessis performed the same duties towards her three daughters, and the female servants of their establishment.

A strong worker himself, M. Joseph Plessis accustomed all who depended upon him to employ their time properly, and to be orderly in their labor. The forging for the year was always laid out in advance; every species of work being accorded to its proper season, and the arrangement once determined upon, was invariably followed.

The articles prepared in the establishment of M. Plessis, were nearly all destined for the commerce of the merchants of Montreal, with the Indians of the north-west. Thus during the autumn and winter, the master and his workmen manufactured axes of *treaty** for the Indian trade. These they deposited in a store before they were completely finished, and the reason was this. The master of the forge, observed in all their rigour, the fasts ordained by the church. While for the remainder of the year, a fast of one or two days per week, gave no hindrance to his ordinary labor; but as it would have been difficult to do as much during the forty days of Lent, he therefore reserved the lighter work for that season. At that time, the heavy hammers were allowed to repose on the anvil, and as there remained nothing more to do to the axes, but to polish and sharpen them, all the workmen could observe their fasts strictly, without overworking themselves and injuring their health.

The same spirit of order that characterized their business arrangements, was observed in the details of the domestic economy, which was presided over by the mother of the family. At the same time great

* The goods furnished to the Indians in exchange for their peltries were called articles *de traite*.

liberality was practised, leaving no room for complaint upon the part of the employés. With such examples before him, young Plessis early contracted that love of labour, that spirit of order, and that uprightness and firmness, which ever after marked his career. From his tenderest years, through the gaiety and irreflexion of childhood, his talents peeped out, assuming as he advanced in years, a solid and brilliant character. He received his first lessons in reading under the paternal roof, and at the same time was taught some chapters of the short catechism, a book too often despised, but which contains the principles of a profound philosophy and a sublime theology.

The child grew, and day by day, displayed an inclination to the paths of virtue and science. His parents lost no time in placing him at the primary school, founded and sustained by the gentlemen of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice. The rapid progress of the new pupil astonished his master; while his habitual gravity made him respected by his companions. But under this serious demeanor, lay hidden a fund of innocent wit, breaking out from time to time, and which did not always escape the notice of that redoubtable martinet father Lucette.

This Father Lucette, was a respectable layman, placed by M. le curé of Montreal at the head of the parish school; the situation assured him a modest salary, together with board and lodging in the Seminary. Without being learned, he succeeded in maintaining the dignity of his position, by a severe discipline which kept the most sprightly in awe.

During nearly half a century, Father Lucette, of whom some wag out of revenge said, *lucet à non lucendo*, reigned with despotic will over the parish school of Montreal; generation after generation came to seat themselves, not under the shadow of his crook, but of his rod. Of all the urchins who succeeded each other on those benches, not a single one had escaped a visit to the Black Cabinet, where the mas-

ter distributed Corporeal chastisement, without any respect of persons.*

When thirty years later Joseph Octave Plessis became Bishop, visiting his native town for the first time after his consecration, Father Lucette, whose green age was passed, but who recalled with satisfaction, the services that he had rendered to the youth of Montreal, was one of the first to throw himself at the knees of the Prelate; and to beg his blessing. "Monseigneur, said he, your benediction if you please, you will pardon me, I am sure, the honor of having given you the whip."

"Very willingly, Father Lucette," replied the Bishop, "but on condition that you never try it again."

II

Studies at the College of Montreal—Work at the forge—The little seminary of Quebec—The vacation and happy journey home of the Scholars.

In the midst of the troubles which followed the taking of the country by the English, the higher schools remained closed. The Jesuit College after having been during a century and a half the centre of letters and sciences in New France, had been delivered over to Lawyers and Soldiers, with the exception of a small portion reserved and occupied by the old proprietors. The Seminary of Quebec, ruined by war and famine, and its very existence even threatened by the Government, could not collect the pupils, who had dispersed during the siege of the Capital.

* *Not a single one*: perhaps that expression is too strong, for tradition says, that a pupil, more cunning than his predecessors, found means of escaping the common lot.

Forseeing his fate, he took the precaution of drawing on seven pair of breeches. The expected sentence was passed, and the condemned went groaning into the Black Cabinet. Amidst the cries, lamentations and resistance of the unfortunate, the preparations for the execution advanced slowly: rampart after rampart fell, and yet the place remained always out of reach of the rod. The patience of Father Lucette was exhausted, and when, after the fall of the fourth covering, he saw before him new entrenchments, his rod fell from his hands, and he felt himself so badly beaten, that he never dared to renew the struggle with that ingenious adversary.

The prospect for learning was deplorable ; a great number of well informed men had left the Colony with the debris of the French Army ; the ranks of the Clergy were thinned by death ; and the means of procuring a superior instruction for the youth of Canada was every day decreasing.

The extent of the danger at length reanimated the courage of the true friends of the country. The finances of the Seminary of Quebec improved so visibly after the treaty of peace of 1763, that by the month of October, 1765, the directors were able to open anew their boarding accommodation for those pupils, who desired to go through a course of classical studies.

In the Government of Montreal, a respectable Priest, M. Curateau, began a Latin school at Long Point, towards 1773 ; shortly afterwards it was transferred to the Chateau Vaudreuil, which thus became the cradle of the College of Montreal. Probably it was in that place, and under the direction of M. Curateau, that the young Plessis learnt the rudiments of Grammar. The superior intelligence of the pupil advanced him rapidly ; however, it appeared that the Latin Grammar had not the same charms for him as History and Geography ; and for many years after he reproached himself with not having given as much time to the precepts versified by *Despautère*, as to the works of Vosgien and Rollin.

After having finished his course of *Belle-Lettres* he became disgusted with study, and testified a desire to remain at home with his father, rather than return to college. Like many other young men who have been through the first half of a classical course, he felt no inclination to plunge into the dry paths of logic, and the obscurities of metaphysics. Many a time afterwards he acknowledged his error, and proclaimed the immense services, that the one and the other had since rendered him, in rectifying his judgment, and extending the scope of his mind, and preparing it for the study of theology.

M. Joseph Plessis, to whom the student communicated his project, did not desire to force the inclination

of his son ; but, on the other hand, he understood well, that it would not do to compromise the future of that son by indulging all his fantasies. He was Father, as the title was then understood, that is to say, he was the head of the family. And while ever ready to consider the reasonable requests of his son, he would have believed himself sadly wanting in his duty, had he allowed himself to be drawn into sanctioning any of his ephemeral projects. "Very well, Joseph," he replied to the young man, "to-morrow you will lay aside the scholars gown, put on the apron and go down with me to the forge. When you wish to resume your studies, you can let me know." This was not precisely the answer the young student expected ; but it was necessary to submit, for according to an old expression, the word of his father was the word of a King.

The day following, Joseph Octave Plessis worked at the bellows, and struck the anvil ! The hours seemed long to the novice, little accustomed to manual labor ; in short for a student who felt that his strength lay in his intellect rather than in his muscle, the trial was very hard. Nevertheless, during a whole week he held up stoutly against the fatigue of the body, and above all against the vexation of spirit, deprived of its usual nourishment.

At last the disgust and lassitude, superinduced by his new occupation, became insupportable, and he surrendered. With the consent of his father, young Plessis put off the apron, resumed the student's dress, and in the autumn of 1778, left with his father, and some fellow pupils, to go and finish his studies at the little seminary of Quebec ; for the classes of rhetoric and philosophy had not yet been opened at Montreal.

At that period the communications between the two cities were attended with difficulties which have long since disappeared, but of which we may form some opinion by the letters of M. Montgolfier, Grand Vicar of the Bishop of Quebec, and Superior of the Seminary of Montreal ; every year towards the end of the

vacancies, he announced to M. Briand, that the pupils of the district of Montreal could not be present at the opening of the classes.

"I must inform your Lordship," he writes, the 25th September, 1775, "that the scholars of this part, will not be able to assemble soon enough to begin the classes at the usual time. There are only five vessels before the town, and all freighted for the King. The scholars can obtain no passage in them. The barges and bateaux, are also retained for the same service. They can then only go by land carriage, of which the most are unequal to the expense, whether for themselves or their luggage."

On the 9th of October following, he returns to the same subject in these terms: "The ecclesiastics and scholars destined for the Seminary of Quebec, are all in a state of embarrassment how to get there."

Sometimes, at the commencement of the holidays, tired of waiting the departure of a schooner, which was never ready to weigh her anchor, and finding their purse very light, the more vigorous pupils would undertake to gain the paternal house on foot, walking all the way from Quebec to Montreal. These journeys were full of amusement, and left the most agreeable souvenirs in the memory of the courageous pedestrians.

The navigation by the schooners was very slow and tiresome, especially when ascending the river. It is related that some unfortunate scholars having left Quebec in one of these small vessels, in the middle of the month of August, and having passed five weeks in their narrow prison, arrived at Montreal at the moment when the vacancies were closing.

Very different was the land route for the strong and happy boys who preferred to follow it. Assembled in the chapel of the Seminary, the travellers joined in a hymn to the protectress of pilgrims; then the joyous band filed out; and in the middle of the great court, shouted a loud adieu to their *Alma Mater*, and like a flight of buzzards in the autumn, directed themselves toward the west, which for them was the land of promise.

With six weeks holidays in the horizon, a light pack upon their shoulders, and a heart bounding with pleasure; the young student travelled leisurely, sometimes to the refrain of some popular song, sometimes cheered by the merry jokes and noisy laughter of his companions. Towards the middle of the day they rested upon the bank of some stream, or at the foot of some shady elm; the haversacks were emptied, and the provisions spread out upon the grass, soon disappeared before the sharp appetites of the travellers. In the evening they knocked at the door of one of the large white houses which border the road from Quebec to Montreal, the costume of the seminarist procuring for them everywhere a favorable reception and a welcome hospitality. *La Grande Chambre* was placed at the disposal of *messieurs les écoliers*; for them the fire was made to sparkle more cheerfully on the hearth, the whitest cloth was spread upon the table, and the plumpest omelettes followed in quick succession from the frying pan.

And in the barn, or upon the new hay, the tired travellers went to sleep off the fatigue of the day; where with abundance of fresh air, they slept more at their ease, and had no fear of disagreeable visitors.

The sun up and all were on foot; when, after a good breakfast, the purse bearer of the party offered to the kind mistress of the house, payment for the accommodation of the whole, he would be stopt by a refusal to accept any thing, and an invitation not to forget to call again on their way back.

Monseigneur Plessis related often and gaily, the incidents of a journey he had thus made with some ecclesiastics and more vigorous scholars of the class of philosophy. This episode of his student life had left upon his memory the most agreeable recollections.

At Quebec, the studies of young Plessis were continued with extraordinary success, and the following testimony was given of him by an old professor of that venerable institution:

"Education," said he, "which ordinarily only serves to cultivate or embellish a barren and ungrateful

soil, did but develop the richness of his. With a natural and easy wit, at once broad and solid, study had no difficulties that it could not smooth down, no distastes that it could not conquer, no obstacles that it could not surmount. Thus he made rapid progress in all his classes; and though he had competitors and rivals, none could dispute with him the pre-eminence."

III

Vocation—Enters the Ecclesiastical State—Professorship—He is named Secretary of the Diocese—His Priesthood.

During the last year of his studies, M. Plessis understood that he was called to embrace the Ecclesiastical State. Though still very young, scarcely 17 years of age, he had attentively considered what would be the best employment for his talents; and he had concluded, that it was in the Priesthood, that he could effect the greatest amount of good for religion and for his country. After the catholic church, he loved Canada; and henceforth, this young man who was on the eve of attaching himself to the service of God, was strongly preoccupied with the future destinies of his native land.

On the 14th August, 1780, at the moment when the pupils were preparing for the holidays, M. Plessis received the tonsure from the hands of Monseigneur Briand. But as six years had to pass away before he could be admitted to the Priesthood, the Bishop judged it proper to employ him in teaching; and the new Ecclesiastic was placed in charge of the classes of *Belles-Lettres* and Rhetoric at the College of Montreal.

A vast memory, a correct taste, extended and various acquirements, rendered him eminently fit for the functions that he was called upon to fulfil. In commencing his course he had however, the mortification to discover that two of his pupils were more advanced than their master, in the Latin tongue. *Despautère*, formerly despised, now took his revenge.

M. Plessis immediately set to work to make up for lost time, and at the end of two weeks, he had so well engraved on his memory the Latin precepts of the old grammarian, that forty years after, he could recite whole pages of him without faltering.

The pupils soon recognized the superior talents of their professor, who on his part, found an unspeakable pleasure in instructing, and qualifying himself to instruct others. He took great pleasure in the great writers of the Augustan Era, and had above all a particular taste for Horace, whose choicest pieces he had learnt by heart. Thus his position was so pleasing to him, that he did not wish to abandon it. In the latter years of his life he expressed great regret that he had ever allowed himself to be drawn from the task of instruction, the duties of which agreed so well with his tastes.

In the month of October 1783, M. Plessis was called to Quebec by Mgr. Briand, to fill the office of Secretary of the Diocese. Though he had not yet received holy orders, the Grand Vicars of Quebec, and of Montreal conjointly, had such confidence in his capacity and discretion, that they suggested this nomination as the best that could be made.

For a whole year, Bishop Briand had suffered so much from a serious sickness, that he had found it impossible to attend to business in a way that he could have wished. His coadjutor, Mgr. D'Esgly, was older than himself, and lived at St. Pierre, on the Island of Orleans. On the other hand, the Grand Vicar of Quebec, M. Gragé, had to exercise important functions at the Seminary, of which he was one of the Directors. Thus a great part of the details of the Diocesan Administration fell upon the Secretary; and these details were numerous and very complicated, for the Diocese of Quebec at that epoch, extended from New Orleans to the coast of Labrador.

By his discretion, his regularity and his aptitude for business, the young lévite proved that he deserved the entire confidence that his Superiors accorded him. His respect and devotion for the venerable Bishop, with

whom he lived, were without bounds; and each day he endeavoured to imitate that beautiful model of Ecclesiastical life that he had ever before his eyes. Between these two men, so different in age and rank, but so worthy of one another, a profound sympathy was established; founded upon a similarity of tastes, of sentiments, and of character.

It was under a master so able and so virtuous, that M. Plessis formed his views of the Sacerdotal character, and acquired without effort, that varied information, which subsequently became so useful to him in the direction of the affairs of the Diocese of Quebec. In his conversations with the old Bishop, he gathered much valuable information, upon the causes which had brought about the fall of the French Government in Canada, and upon the men who directed the affairs of the Colony, before it had been ceded to England. These conversations doubtless had their influence on the opinions that M. Plessis formed, touching the merit of the two Governments. In considering the system of vexatious trickery organized against the church, and the people of the country, by some of the Chiefs and subordinate employés, who were sent by the Court of Louis XV, at that time under the sceptre of Madame Pompadour, he could not but admit that under the English Government, the Catholic Clergy and rural population, enjoyed more liberty than was accorded to them before the conquest.

The relations between the Bishop and his Secretary soon became modified, without however, being interrupted in their object. The failing health of Mgr. Briand prevented him from occupying himself as actively as he could have wished in the affairs of the Diocese. The efforts that he made to relieve the spiritual necessities of his flock exhausted his strength, and his delicate conscience was much disturbed by this state of things. The Holy See therefore acceded to his representations, and relieved him of the burden which was overwhelming him. On the 29th November, 1784, the Prelate transferred to his Coadjutor the title and charge of Bishop of Quebec.

Mgr. D'Esgly hastened to call to his assistance a younger and stronger man. At Detroit, resided as Curé and Grand Vicar, a respectable priest who had been formerly Secretary of the Diocese and Superior of the Seminary of Quebec; a preacher distinguished by the unction and fluency of his discourses; a man recommended by the purity of his morals and his truly ecclesiastical life; M. Jean François Hubert had acquired the confidence of his Bishop, the esteem of his confrères, and the respect of his fellow citizens; when his zeal induced him to offer for the mission of Detroit, far removed from the Episcopal City, and separated from the central portion of the Province by vast solitudes. It was upon this estimable priest that the choice of Mgr. D'Esgly fell.

M. Hubert named Bishop of Almyre and Coadjutor of Mgr. D'Esgly by Pope Pius VI, was consecrated at Quebec the 29th November, 1786. He had to fix his residence in that city, and was charged with the greater part of the administration of the Diocese; for the age and infirmities of the titular Bishop retained him in his parish at St. Pierre.

Under these circumstances, the Coadjutor was glad to profit by the experience and light of M. Plessis, who had been promoted to the priesthood on the 11th March preceding. Though the new priest was only 23 years of age, such was the general opinion entertained of his capacity, that his concurrence in the Diocesan administration appeared absolutely necessary.

At the death of Mgr. D'Esgly in 1788, the Coadjutor took possession of his seat, and appreciated more and more the talents of his Secretary. In 1789, some of the officers of the Government proposed to found at Quebec, a University, which might be used at once by catholics and protestants. The plan was artfully combined for placing the means of superior instruction into the hands of the enemies of the French race and of catholicism. Its principal object was to employ the property of the Jesuits, to deprive the Canadians of their language and their religion, and

so artfully was the veil of the "public welfare" thrown over that project, that both Lord Dorchester and the Bishop of Capse, then Coadjutor, had fallen into the snare and favored powerfully the proposed institution.

To these wire-pullers, Mgr. Hubert opposed a wisdom and firmness beyond all praise, and succeeded in stifling the measure in its cradle. He drew up a memorandum and presented it to the Government, in which he demanded that they should take "some measures for securing the Jesuits College, as well as their other property, to the Canadian people, under the authority of the Bishop of Quebec." That memorandum, remarkable for the solidity of its reasoning, the soundness of its views, and the clearness of its style, was the result of a meeting, at which the old Bishop of Quebec and the Directors of the Seminary had assisted. The compilation of the document had been assigned to M. Plessis, who fulfilled his task to the satisfaction of both Bishops.

The services rendered by the Secretary, induced his Superior to find for him some agreeable post near his person, and two or three years afterwards a deplorable accident furnished the opportunity of doing so.

IV

M. Plessis is named Curé of Quebec.

The 21st May, 1792, M. David Augustin Hubert, curé of Quebec, and a near relation of the Bishop, was drowned in going to the assistance of one of his brethren on the Island of Orleans. The boat in which he had embarked was deeply laden; the wind blew with great violence. Not being able to withstand the agitation of the waves, which threatened to submerge the boat, her head was turned towards Point Levi, but in going round she shipped such a quantity of water, that she sunk near the shore, opposite the place called *Cabane des Pères*. Of twelve persons who were in the boat, ten were drowned, and among them

the curé of Quebec. By his zeal, his charity and his gentleness, M. Hubert had rendered himself dear to all classes of society, and the news of his death was received with universal regret.

To fill up the place of a curé so generally beloved, might have been an embarrassing task. Fortunately, the Bishop of Quebec had near him a model priest, who had shown himself on every occasion worthy of the trust that up to that time had been confided to him ; the spirit of order, the industry, the superior talents and eminent qualities which distinguished his Secretary, were so many guarantees that he would acquit himself with success in his duties as Curé of Quebec.

M. Plessis, it is true, had only as yet been six years in the Priesthood, but his gravity brought him as much respect as though he had been a clerical veteran ; his youth then, was no obstacle to his promotion. And these reasons decided Mgr. Hubert to confide to him the cure of Quebec, obliging him still to keep to the duties of Secretary. On the 2nd June, 1792, M. Plessis took solemn possession of his benefice, and gave himself energetically to the hard functions of the parochial ministry.

We produce some remarks made on that occasion by M. Raimbault, in his funeral oration over the great Bishop. "It is difficult," said he "to succeed to one of those rare men, whom Providence seems to have endowed, not only with a handsome exterior, but with qualities the most captivating. Affable ways, gentle manners, and a happy temper, have invincible attractions ; what a trial then for his successor, if he present himself in a shape less pleasing ; does not every one seem to reproach him, that nature has not endowed him in the same degree as his predecessor ? And should one be able in such a case, if not to cause the object of public affection to be forgotten, at least to conciliate men's minds and compel their esteem and confidence, we must confess, that such transcendent merits would be necessary to accomplish it, as would be a phenomenon rarer still than the first "

In short the zeal of the new Curé, and the unshakeable firmness that he had displayed in some difficult circumstances, drew upon him from the commencement of his administration, many grudges from those who had hoped to meet a hand less firm than that of the young Curé.

M. Plessis did not allow these minor miseries to impede him, but continued to fulfil his duties with the same exactitude and the same devotion. Such is the testimony rendered to him by a man who lived then in his intimacy.

“What a spirit of order in the administration of that large parish? A memory which forgot nothing of all the diverse affairs for which he had to provide. He foresaw all, not only of his own duties, but traced out the daily task of his collaborateurs. In spite of the constant removals, in spite of the various concourse of persons and events, he knew all his parishioners by name; he knew their wants, their affairs; nothing escaped his sagacity and his foresight. Assiduous in the performance of the duties of a most laborious ministry, he was always ready at the confessional, whether to distribute the bread of the word of God by the methodical sermon, full of solid instruction, or to visit the sick in the Hospitals or prisons; whether to concert with his Bishop upon the most thorny affairs, or to discuss the most abstract matters; and all without ceasing a single day to devote some time to studies, analagous to his condition.

In charging himself with the parish of Quebec, M. Plessis had not ceased to act as Secretary of his Bishop. Above all, in secret and difficult affairs, the principal part of the writing and compiling was his by right. Still, for lightening the burden a little, *they gave* him an assistant Secretary, who was charged with the details of the office. His occupations had then become so numerous, that it was not only necessary that he should consecrate his whole days thereto, but often part of his nights. Rising at four in the morning it was rarely that he sought his bed before midnight;

and often he was called from his short repose to visit some sick person.

The moments of leisure that he could obtain, in the midst of his long watches, were religiously consecrated to some severe studies, especially those attached to the functions and duties of the priest. Such was his desire to extend the circle of his acquirements, that he bethought himself of devoting to that study one night in each week. His robust temperament, and strong will, sustained him at first in this undertaking; but at the end of two or three months he was obliged to renounce it, perceiving that after a night without rest, he lost as much time the next day in struggling against a disposition to sleep, as he had hoped to gain by appropriating the preceding night.

While occupying himself generally with the religious instruction of his parishoners, M. Plessis watched more particularly over the young people, whom he regarded as the most interesting portion of his fold. When the children whom he had prepared for their first communion, had left the seats of the catechist, their Curé never forgot them; he watched over their conduct; called them before him to give them good counsel, and endeavored above all to inspire them with a distaste for those dangerous reunions, where in the midst of the pleasures and intoxication of the dance, so many young persons sacrifice their precious time, losing all taste for their religious duties, and often compromising their future. He loved to repeat to them occasionally these words of Saint-François de Sales: "*I say of dances, that which the doctors have said of champignons: the best are good for nothing. I say the same of balls, the best are no good. These recreations are ordinarily dangerous; they expel devotion from the mind, they cool down your charity, and awake a thousand species of mischievous inclinations.*"

To encourage a sound education among the working classes, he founded some schools in the suburbs of Saint-John and Saint-Rochs, chose himself the masters and frequently visited the classes.

When among the catechists, or in the schools, he met with some happy tempers, or superior minds, he engaged the parents to place them at college; if the family were not in a condition to bear the expenses, then the purse of the generous priest opened more or less widely according as circumstances required.

The church, the bar, and the medical profession; owed many of their most distinguished members to the wise discernment and liberality of the Curé of Quebec. Sometimes when he discovered transcendent talent, he charged himself with its cultivation, in his moments of leisure. I will cite here an example of his success in this line. One of his Vicars informed him one day, that he had remarked at catechism a child full of intelligence, but whose parents could not educate him for want of means. That was sufficient to excite the interest of M. Plessis; the child was presented to him, and was found to correspond exactly with the portrait that had been traced of him. The Curé received him in his house, gave him lessons when he had time, and at the end of seventeen months the scholar had learnt all his Latin grammar, and finished his course of the *Belles-Lettres*. He was then placed in the little Seminary, and entered upon the class of Rhetoric, where he took the first places, without, however, fatiguing himself with work. After finishing these studies with distinction, he declared he had no taste for the ecclesiastical state; and his protector then procured him the means of studying law. This pupil of M. Plessis, remarkable for his wit and facile eloquence, shone at the bar and rose rapidly to the head of his profession; and when age and experience had ripened his talents, he was called to preside over the old House of Assembly, and at a later period, was known as Chief Justice Remi Vallières, of the Lower Canadian Bench.

As a preacher M. Plessis had many different qualities from those which distinguished his predecessor. Full of gentleness and unction, and remarkable for his elegant manners, M. David Hubert had a particular talent for reaching and moving the hearts of his audi-

tory. In the pulpit the gestures of M. Plessis were noble; his speech grave, clear and convincing, was well suited to instruct and enlighten; but rarely to touch. His instructions were never very long, and they were thus always listened to with pleasure and profound attention.

In the midst of the efforts of M. Plessis to direct and instruct his parishioners, he perceived that many among them escaped the influence of his ministry: these were some Catholic families of British origin who were established at Quebec. Though very few, they had a right to the special solicitude of their pastor, whose duty it was to provide for their spiritual wants, and protect them against the seductions of heresy. The charitable Curé wished to put himself in direct relations with them; and with that object in view, notwithstanding his multiplied occupations, he applied himself with ardor to the study of English, and thanks to his application and good memory, he could at the end of some months speak it and write it correctly; but he never mastered the pronunciation. So that when he preached in that language, he would sometimes meet with rebellious ears, who could not seize the sense of his best discourses. He was the first to joke upon this subject, and he was fond of depicting the bewilderment of an honest Irish woman, who after listening to the advice which he had given her in English, ended by declaring that she did not understand a word of French.

V

Death of M. Briand—M. Plessis pronounces his funeral oration.

In the month of June, 1794, M. Plessis had the grief to lose his old friend and protector, the venerable Bishop Briand, to whom had been given the title of Mgr. l'ancien, from the time that he had resigned his seat.

Arrived at Quebec, the 17th August, 1741, in quality of Secretary to Mgr. Pontbriand, M. de Briand was

attached to Canada, which he regarded as his second country, and to which he had, during 53 years, consecrated his talents and his energy. By his loyalty, his disinterestedness and his frankness, he had acquired the esteem and respect of the English Governors, who succeeded each other in the Province ; but very often he proved to them by his firmness, that he was capable of defending the interests of his religion, and the rights of his Diocese.

"In my life I have never feared man," he wrote, during his last sickness to Lord Dorchester; "I reproach myself at present, that I am at death's door, and yet not sufficiently in fear of God, my redoubtable judge ; I know how to love, but not to fear. Kindness renders me weak and soft, but coarse and hard words find me a firm man."

M. Plessis was 'charged with pronouncing the funeral oration of the virtuous prelate, whose merits nobody knew so well, and he acquitted himself worthily of that task. He spoke of the two sieges that Quebec had sustained in the space of 16 years, and expatiated at great length upon the evils which had afflicted the country during many years before the conquest. He showed how divine Providence punished the guilty with the horrors of war and famine, and preserved the colony from the misfortunes which were then assailing France. I will content myself with producing some passages of that remarkable discourse.

"The disorders which reigned in this Colony had been carried up to heaven, and the cry for vengeance had provoked the anger of the most high. God desolated it with the horrors of war ; and, what was considered by just souls as a plague still more terrible, the Church of Canada found herself widowed and without a head, by the death of a prelate, who had governed her for nineteen years. What a desolate prospect ! Ah ! what bitterness was then spread through every christian family ! every one complained of his unhappy fate, and was afflicted at not being able to leave a country, where the Kingdom of God

seemed to be destroyed for ever. Our conquerors regarded us with a jealous and suspicious eye, inspiring us with nothing but horror ; we could not be persuaded that men, strangers to our soil, to our language, to our laws, our customs and our worship, could ever render back to Canada, that which she had lost in changing masters."

After having praised the liberality and humanity of the English nation, who had welcomed so generously the French Ecclesiastics, hunted out of the old mother country of Canada by its demagogues and philosophers, the orator explained the ideas of the defunct Bishop, touching the results of the cession of Canada to England.

"Far from giving into these errors," continued he, "Mgr. Briand had scarcely seen the British arms placed over the gates of our City ; when he conceived in an instant that God had transferred to England the dominion over this country ; that with the change of possession, our duties had changed their object, that the ties that had till then united us to France, had been broken asunder ; that our capitulations, as well as the treaty of peace of 1763, were so many new ties that attached us to Great Britain, in submitting us to her Sovereign ; he perceived that, which no body else seemed to suspect, that religion herself would gain by the change of domination."

M. Plessis recalled afterwards, the sentiments of profound attachment to France, which were engraved upon the hearts of the Canadians ; and he applauded very sincerely these noble souvenirs ; but he strongly condemned the aspirations of some citizens who had wished to raise in the Province the standard of rebellion. Lastly, having shown the doctrine of the church, upon the obedience due to constituted authorities, he continued in these terms to develop the theory and practice of Mgr Briand, in respect to the established government.

"Mgr. Briand held as a maxim, that there were no true Christians or sincere catholics, who did not submit themselves to their legitimate sovereign. He

had learnt from Jesus Christ, that it was a duty to render to Cæsar that which belongs to Cæsar ; from St. Paul, that every soul must be submissive to established authorities.....”

“ During the invasion of the Province by the Americans in 1775, our illustrious prelate knew already the delicate state of feeling, or rather the illusion of a part of the people.... But he would have ceased to be great, if such a consideration had made him vary in his principles, or deranged his execution of them. Without then disturbing himself about the consequences, he hastened to prescribe to all the Curés of his Diocese, the conduct they should preserve in that delicate circumstance. All received his orders with respect and imparted them to their flock. The prelate preached by example, enclosing himself in the besieged capital. God blessed that resolution ; the people, after some incertitude, held finally to their duty, and defended themselves with zeal and courage. At the end of some months a favorable wind dispersed the tempest ; the Assyrians confused, withdrew in disorder ; Bethulie was delivered, the Province preserved, and our temples resounded with songs of victory and of thanksgivings.”

In thus retracing the virtues and noble qualities of Mgr. Briand, M. Plessis depicted those which distinguished himself. Firm as his friend, he also like him, honored sincerely legitimate authority, and taught others to do it honor ; to submit to the representatives of the law in all that belonged to them ; he knew however, how to offer a resistance not to be turned aside, when they tried to encroach upon the rights of the church. There was one duty before which he never recoiled : and that was, to render to Cæsar that which belonged to Cæsar, but when circumstances demanded it, he never forgot the words of St. Peter, that it was better to obey God than to obey man.



SECOND PART.

I

M. Plessis named coadjutor of the Bishop of Quebec—Letters from the Duke of Kent—Ecclesiastical Society of Saint Michel—Delay in expediting the papal Bull—Consecration of M. Plessis—Death of Mgr. Denaut—Installation—M. B. C. Panet.

For some years Mgr. Hubert felt his strength diminishing rapidly; the fatigues that he had experienced in his distant missions, and in visiting his vast diocese, had seriously injured his health. He ardently longed for some repose and tranquility, to prepare himself for death. Having received a favorable reply from the Pope, to his demand that he might be relieved from his heavy burden, he was able to resign his seat in favor of Mgr. Denaut.*

The first care of the new titular, was to secure the assistance of a coadjutor still young, endowed with health and strength, and who might reasonably be expected to furnish a long career in the exercise of the Episcopal functions.

That man had been prepared by providence. On the 4th September 1797, the Bishop of Quebec took possession of his seat; two days after, some letters of the Grand Vicar to the Curé of Quebec, announced that he had chosen that worthy ecclesiastic for his coadjutor.

The Clergy and the people had long regarded M. Plessis as specially destined to become the first pastor of the Diocese, so that as soon as the retirement of Mgr. Hubert was known, all eyes were turned towards him, who for fourteen years, as Secretary, had taken so

* Mgr. Hubert gave in his resignation on the 1st September, 1797, he died at the General Hospital, Quebec, on the 17th October following, aged 58 years.

large a part in the government of the Diocese. M. Plessis was not yet 35 years of age, and yet he already possessed the confidence of his clerical brethren, and enjoyed great influence among them, acquired by his talents, his knowledge and his virtues.

"Clever, and already trained up to the business, possessing all the acquirements befitting the high duties of a Bishop, profoundly versed in the holy scriptures, Ecclesiastical History, the holy Fathers, the rites and usages of the church, he was ever distinguished by a great fund of piety, virtue and zeal. None other seemed so capable of sustaining the honor of religion, and of serving his country in the rank of first pastor of the Church of Canada."

This appreciation of the merits of M. Plessis, made thirty years after, reproduces faithfully the judgment held by his co-temporaries.

His attachment to the rules of the church, and his fidelity in exacting from all, a strict observance of them, had often displeased men accustomed to command, and to encounter no refusals to their demands. Thus, the Duke of Kent, who during his sojourn in Canada, had become acquainted with the Curé of Quebec, believed it his duty to give some advice to Sir Robert Prescott, Governor of the Province. In a letter written from Halifax, on the 16th October, 1797, the Duke expressed his anxieties on this subject. "As to the coadjutor M. Plessis," he told the General, "I believe it my duty to inform you that he is a man, in whom you will find perhaps, that it is not prudent to repose too much confidence. I knew him while he was Secretary to Bishop Hubert, and it was well known during my residence in Canada, that he entirely governed the Bishop and the Seminary, and induced them to adopt opinions quite incompatible with our ideas of the supremacy of the King in Ecclesiastical affairs."

"I know," he wrote afterwards, "that while I resided in Canada, the late Bishop Hubert, objected strongly to remit to the Government a list of the nominations made to parishes, and as we believed that

Prelate entirely guided by the present coadjutor, that refusal was regarded by the most zealous subjects of his Majesty in the country, as one of the numerous reasons which placed M. Plessis in a doubtful position with respect to his loyalty towards Great Britain."

The Duke of Kent wished the choice to fall upon an old Curé incapable of filling the duties of a Bishop. In learning the intention of the Prince, M. Plessis, who had at first refused the mitre, now understood that for the welfare of the Church of Canada, it was his duty to accept the offers of Mgr. Denaut. The Governor's Secretary, M. Ryland, then a friend of the Curé of Quebec, smoothed the way, and General Prescott accepted the man that public opinion indicated as most worthy of the Episcopate. On the 20th September, 1797, Mgr. Denaut informed Cardinal Gerdil of his success. "Providence has watched over the Church of Canada: I have obtained for coadjutor one well versed in Ecclesiastical affairs, well acquainted with the Diocese, and possessing the confidence of the soundest part of the Clergy and the esteem of the people."

Convinced that M. Ryland had rendered a veritable service to the catholic religion, in removing from the episcopal dignity an incapable subject, M. Plessis addressed his sincere thanks to the secretary, who afterwards took advantage of that act of courtesy.

Though as yet only occupying the second rank in the Diocese, the Coadjutor elect, did not delay to give some proofs of the spirit of organization and solicitude for ameliorating the lot of a very estimable part of the diocesan clergy, which animated him. He conceived at this period the project of forming a society for giving aid to infirm priests, who, after spending their days in poor missions, found themselves sometimes deprived of necessaries, and abandoned to the charity of strangers. Desirous of furnishing to his brother clergy the means of assisting one another in their misfortunes, he put on paper the basis of a society of mutual assistance, and furnished with that plan carefully prepared, he invited eight of his con-

freres to unite with him at the house of his good friend M. DeGuise, Curé of Saint Michel. M. Plessis having been named President of the Assembly, developed the advantages of his project, and had the pleasure of seeing it adopted by his confreres. He has therefore a good right to be regarded as the founder of the Ecclesiastical Society of Saint Michel, "the principal object of which, was to put the associates in a fair way of aiding one another, in case of infirmity, of sickness, of old age or invalidity."*

This retiring fund for infirm priests was established the 5th June, 1799 ; it was so wisely organized by its founder and his friends, that it maintains itself flourishingly to this day, and has fulfilled the objects for which it was instituted to the general satisfaction of the associates.

To return to the supplication of Mgr. Denaut, to the Papal Court, on behalf of his Coadjutor, it is not astonishing that he should have waited a long time for the reply ; in those troubled times the relations of particular churches with the chief of the Universal Church, were interrupted ; and continued to be so during many years. On the 10th of February, 1798, by order of the Directory, General Berthier entered Rome with his army, and took the Castle of Saint Angelo, in the name of the French Republic. On the 20th of the same month, Pius VI was forced to leave the Vatican, and was conducted to Florence under the guard of a detachment of Cavalry ; drawn from prison to prison, the Holy Father died at Vienna in the month of August 1799.

During the captivity of its legitimate Sovereign, Rome had been delivered to the disorders always accompanying a state of anarchy ; in consequence of which the Cardinals assembled at Venice to choose a successor to the venerable pontiff. Cardinal Chiaramonte was declared elected on the 14th March, 1800, and out of respect for the memory of his predecessor took the name of Pius VII. The new Pope

* Rules of the Ecclesiastical Society of Saint Michel, art. 1.

hastened to regulate the business which had accumulated during the bondage of Pius VI ; but it was so great that the Bulls by which M. Plessis was named Bishop of Canathe, and Coadjutor of Quebec, were not expected till the 26th April, 1800.

At this period Bishops were scarce in North America : the nearest to Canada was Mgr. O'Donnell, Vicar Apostolic of Newfoundland, and Mgr. Carroll, Bishop of Baltimore. As neither of these two could very easily reach Quebec, above all during the winter, Mgr. Denaut, in order to consecrate his coadjutor, was obliged to have recourse to the assistance of two priests, Messrs. Pouget, Curé of Berthier, and Bertrand, Curé of River-du-Loup. The ceremony took place in the Cathedral, the 25th January, 1801, in presence of the most distinguished persons of the Province, as we learn from an eye witness. "What an interesting spectacle," he says, "was that of his consecration, in which we viewed him, his brows encircled with the sacred bandeau, and decorated with the insignia of the Episcopate by the hands of the consecrating pontiff ; and could contemplate him in all the pomp of sacerdotal sovereignty. The presence of the representative of his King, of so many personages commendable by their rank, was a presage of the favor that he has since deserved from all classes of the community."

After his consecration, Mgr. Plessis still continued to fulfil the functions of Curé ; and to lighten the burden of the titular Bishop, who had returned to his parish of Longueuil ; sharing the details of the administration of the Diocese, and especially the business of the district of Quebec.

The unexpected death of Mgr. Denaut took place on the 17th January, 1806, and the Bishop of Canathe ascended to the Episcopal seat of Quebec, sooner than he desired ; he however, took the reins of the Ecclesiastical Government with a firm hand, and as a man who had been a long time accustomed to exercise authority. Immediately after his inauguration he presented to the Clergy his future coadjutor, the Curé

of Rivière-Ouelle, M. Bernard Claude Panet, and announced that he hoped to obtain from the Holy Father the confirmation of that choice. M. Panet was a man extremely respectable, but there were many who deemed him too far advanced in years for the coadjutorship, in fact he was ten years older than his Bishop, to whom he had taught Philosophy at the little Seminary of Quebec. Mgr. Plessis, whose views extended very far, reasoned differently. In the ordinary course of things, it was probable that his health and strength would sustain him many years, and that he would live at least as long as M. Panet. He could thus prepare for the Episcopacy, some young member of the Clergy, who, at the death of the two old Bishops, would be ready to replace them, and maintain the established traditions. Providence ordained that it should be otherwise, for the pupil that he had prepared as his successor, M. Pierre Flavien Turgeon, did not ascend the episcopal seat of Quebec, till twenty-five years after the death of his venerable friend.

II

The new Bishop's first address to his Diocese—Project of dividing the Diocese of Quebec—M. Alexander MacDonell—Burning and rebuilding of the Convent of the Ursulines at Three-Rivers—M. Burke, Curé of Halifax, attempts to establish a Catholic College—College of Nicolet.

In his address upon entering office, the Bishop of Quebec developed as the rule which was to guide him the words of the Great Apostle : " I will employ myself willingly in every thing that I can, and I will employ myself beyond my strength for your welfare, and above all for the salvation of your souls."

During the whole course of his Episcopacy, he worked without relaxation, to prove that he had truly adopted the advice of St. Paul, and that he desired to put it into practice. He knew beforehand that numerous difficulties awaited him in his career, if he would fulfil the duties of a Bishop, and he wished to do so with all the sincerity of his heart. To one of his Grand Vicars who wished him happiness and peace,

he replied : " Common gratitude does not permit me to be indifferent to the wishes that you have formed for my happiness ; but it remains to be seen if the happiness of a Bishop consists in any thing else, but crosses and difficulties, which may purify him and render him worthy of eternal glory." *

With a rapid glance, he saw at once all the wants of his immense diocese, and undertook to provide for them without delay. One of his first thoughts was to have this diocese divided, that the vineyard might be more effectually cultivated. In announcing the death of Mgr. Denaut to Cardinal Piétro, Prefect of the Propaganda, he took the opportunity of broaching the subject, and expressed a hope that some day the Court of Rome would come to an understanding with the Court of St. James, for the erection of a Metropolis, and some Bishoprics in British North America ; meantime he begged that the Holy See would allow him three Coadjutors—one at Montreal, one in Upper Canada, and the third in Nova Scotia.

This division had already been proposed in 1789, by Mgr. Hubert, in a letter to Cardinal Antonelli ; but the measure had been deferred to a more convenient season, and in 1807 it appeared to be more easy to carry it out. Mgr. Panet desired to fix himself at Montreal ; on the other hand the possibility of establishing a bishopric in Upper Canada was foreseen, and thus two parts of the original project were about to be realized.

" I am busy now," wrote Mgr. Plessis in 1807, " with a difficult task, that is, to get the government to agree to the establishment of a Catholic Bishop in Upper Canada. If the thing turns out well, I shall have the honor of recommending to the Holy See, the subject who seems to me best calculated for that place, and whom I have already placed among the number of my Grand Vicars." †

This Grand Vicar who had already resided in Upper Canada since three years, was Mr. Alexander

* Letter to Mr. Conefroy.

† Letter to M. Boiret, procureur general of Foreign Missions at Rome.

MacDonell, a virtuous missionary, and of an enterprising and courageous disposition. He had acquired in Ireland an excellent reputation with the English Government, where he had served some time as chaplain to a Highland Regiment.*

The Bishop of Quebec would have been glad to have closed this affair as quick as possible, and would have preferred treating for it in person ; but the war which continued between France and Great Britain, did not permit the subjects of the latter to pass through France, without being exposed to arrest and confinement ; under such circumstances, Mgr. Plessis could not undertake a voyage to Rome. The means of corresponding with the Holy See became also very difficult ; for most of the letters sent from Quebec to the Propaganda, were first delayed at Liverpool or London, and had to pass through Lisbon and Cadiz before finally reaching their destination. It was thought a fortunate circumstance when these letters were replied to at the end of a year. It therefore became impossible to treat by letter a question so complicated, while so many obstacles existed to the transportation of despatches. Then the American war followed, adding its consequences and dangers to the Canadian traveller. All these embarrassments had the effect of delaying, till the re-establishment of peace, all negotiations for the creation of new dioceses.

In expecting that great question would work to the advantage of religion, Mgr. Plessis continued to carry out the plans laid down by his predecessor, and undertaking such new ones, as would offer to all his flock the benefits of a christian education.

* The first band of Highlanders that arrived in Upper Canada had followed an Irish Priest named McKenna. In 1776, M. Montgolfier spoke of them in these terms : " That missionary has been charged with accompanying a new colony of Highlanders, about 300 in number, who, they say, are going to settle in Upper Canada, where they hope to enjoy the Catholic religion without molestation. They have already arrived at Orange, and intend to fix altogether in the same place with their missionary, who alone understands their language. I have given him the ordinary powers for ministering to his ambulating parish." Many years after, Mr. Alexander MacDonell joined to this first troop a part of the Highlanders who had been licensed ; the whole formed the settlement of Glengarry.

A few months only after he had taken possession of his seat, providence furnished him the occasion of testifying his charity and his zeal in the re-establishment of a very precious institution.

Mgr. de Saint-Vallier had built at Three-Rivers a convent, which contained some schools and an hospital kept by the Ursulines. This house, reduced to ashes about fifty years after its foundation, was re-established by the generosity of the clergy and the faithful of the diocese. On the 2nd October, 1806, a second fire broke out, and in a few hours destroyed the monastery, the church and the hospital. At the news of this misfortune, Mgr. Plessis hastened to supply the first necessities of the Sisters, and to procure them a retreat while their house was being rebuilt.

To enable them to judge of the deep interest he took in their affairs and his desire to administer consolation in their afflictions, he addressed them in a letter worthy of a Bishop of the first ages of the church.

"We have learnt," said he "that a cruel fire has reduced to ashes your Church and your Monastery, and consumed in a few hours the work of many years. We cannot undertake to express to you the first impression which that news made upon us; it was as painful as could be supposed in a heart sincerely affectionated towards you in J. C., and which takes the most lively interest in all which concerns you. We have represented to ourselves your flock, wandering about in the darkness of the night, desolate, and not knowing what would become of you, without home, without clothing and without resources. . . . To these afflicting reflections have succeeded others less painful, and which doubtless you have had leisure to make before us: these are, firstly, that the fire which has dislodged you from your Monastery is a temporal accident, that you could neither foresee nor hinder, and which, however vexatious it may appear to the natural eye, is less so to the eye of faith, than would be one single sin that you had committed. Secondly, in this event we perceive the beneficent hand of the most high, who has wished to prove his

servants. We believe finally, that God in afflicting you, has desired to let you see that his Providence is inexhaustible, and has given a means to the faithful of this Diocese of exercising towards you a charity, to which there is nothing ever wanting, but the occasion to manifest itself."

The Ursulines of Quebec opened their Convent to the Nuns of Three-Rivers. Sixteen of them profited by the invitation, while the others remained to watch over the reconstruction of their Convent. By his example, by his exhortations and addresses to all the parishes of his Diocese, Mgr. Plessis procured aid in abundance for the re-establishment of the Monastery and of the Hospital.

All institutions that had for their object the glory of God, and the welfare of our fellow creatures, were assured of finding in the Bishop of Quebec a friend and a protector; he interested himself above all in works destined to furnish instruction to young people, and to guide them into the paths of virtue; and though as yet only Coadjutor, he had given many proofs of his disposition in that respect. In a distant part of his Diocese, M. Burke, Grand Vicar and Curé of Halifax, had tried many years to establish a College for the preparation of students destined for the ecclesiastical state. After having collected among the Catholics the necessary sum for covering the first cost of the enterprise, he was suddenly arrested in his proceedings by the Government of Nova Scotia, who enjoined him to proceed no further. That order was withdrawn at the end of three years; and the works were then recommenced with a new ardor, and the buildings soon prepared for the reception of the pupils; but it was necessary to obtain professors. In 1805, M. Burke addressed himself to the Jesuits who had retired to Russia. Through the medium of Father Strickland, established at London, he succeeded in obtaining from Father Bozowski, the promise that two fathers of the company should be sent to him, as soon as the difficulties raised by the english government should be got over. Mgr. Plessis exerted himself to

the utmost to advance the objects of M. Burke, first because of the good the Jesuits would do in that part of his Diocese, and next in the hope of being able, after a first success, to obtain the admission of other regular priests into the missions of Upper Canada.

This project failed because the British Government refused to admit the Jesuits into the British provinces of America, and afterwards, because the Propaganda would only allow them to go into the Diocese of Quebec in the quality of secular priests.

The Bishop and his Grand Vicar then proposed to employ as professors, some secular priests that they hoped to find in England; at the commencement of the year 1808, Mgr. Plessis wrote about it to M. DeBouvens, his agent in London.*

"As to the Catholic School to be established in the capital of Nova Scotia, there are some precautions to take. The Government of that Province, as well as that of Lower Canada, has less liberality than the General Government of the British Empire. We cannot flatter ourselves with being able to establish catholic professors, until they are acknowledged, or at least tolerated by his Majesty's Ministers, and furnished with passports. Now that is not very easy to obtain from a Ministry, inimical as you know, to our religion, and whose call to the administration of affairs, was in consequence of their hatred towards it."

We see that the Bishop of Quebec, if he had little confidence in the liberality of the English ministry, had still less in the Governors of Canada and Nova Scotia. M. Burke could not obtain the necessary permission, to enable some French priests who had learnt English at London, to come to his College. Compelled therefore, to lay aside his project and wait for better times, he employed part of his funds to instruct at the Seminary of Quebec, several young men that he had destined for his College at Halifax.

* M. Bourret, a sulpician priest who had been many years agent for the Bishops of Quebec at London, died on the 23rd of October, 1807, and was replaced by M. DeBouvens.

Mgr. Plessis who had shared largely in the attempts made by his Grand Vicar, for the establishment of a College in Nova Scotia, was not the man to neglect similar institutions in the centre of the country. Two houses of education only, had for a long time performed the duty of instructing the youth of the Province, these were the little Seminary of Quebec, and the College of Montreal. The second of these establishments had augmented the number of its professors by the arrival of some priests, who had been obliged to leave France during the reign of terror, and who had been called to Montreal by the Gentlemen of Saint Sulpice.

A third institution of the same kind, was now opened at Nicolet, in the vicinity of Three-Rivers, but it was humble, little known, and wanted a protector. The beneficent hand of the worthy prelate drew it from its embarrassments and placed it on a solid foundation.

In October, 1805, Mgr. Denaut had erected into a small Seminary, the elementary school founded at Nicolet, by M. Louis Marie Brassard, Curé of the parish.* Placed at mid distance between two great houses of education, this new school would consequently do good service, and Mgr. Plessis therefore believed it to be his duty to favor it: "I have nothing more at heart" wrote he in 1807, "than to see these different houses propagating the reign of God in this part of the world; and it is possible that the growing school at Nicolet may become through God's own

* The Brassard family was one of the oldest in the country. In 1637, Anthony Brassard, born in Normandy, married at Quebec Françoise Méry. Their descendants are numerous in the Province. M. Brassard Deschenaux, secretary of M. l'Intendant Bigot belonged to that family. Louis Marie Brassard, born at Quebec, the 19th September, 1726, was the son of M. Jean Baptiste Brassard, and of Dame Marie Françoise Huppé Lacroix. He was ordained Priest the 21st December, 1749. After having been Vicar nine months at Charlesbourg, he was named Curé of Nicolet, the first of October, 1750; he at the same time served at the Bay du Febvre, where he built a Church and a Presbytery. Becoming infirm in 1791, he obtained the aid of M. Alexis Durocher, who was named acting Curé. M. Brassard died the 27th December. 1800. He left his house and land for a parish school; the testament was invalid, but his brother Peter Brassard generously ceded his rights to Mgr. Denaut, and desired that the will of his brother should be carried out to the letter.

"mysterious ways, a means of supplementing the other two; which being more known and more important, are more likely to excite the envy of the enemies of religion."

In the autumn of 1806, M. Raimbault was named Superior of this College and Curé of Nicolet. The following year the Bishop added a wing to the old house of M. Brassard, and during the rest of his life, he continued to expend money upon that establishment, which without the aid of its generous benefactor, might probably have been condemned to perish.

The College of Nicolet became an object of predilection to Mgr. Plessis, who seemed to be Chief Director. It was him who drew up the rules, traced out the course of study, who busied himself most seriously with its material interests, and whose own money procured it many good estates. Twice a month he wrote to the Superior and to the Director, to advise them to suggest ameliorations, and to encourage them in their hard work. He exacted from the President, the Director, and the Steward, a detailed account of the expenses of their respective departments. Notes of the progress of the pupils were frequently transmitted to him, to enable him to judge of the talents and qualities of each of the professors and scholars who had passed some years in the College, that he might judge beforehand, whether they were proper or not for the ecclesiastical state.

As a consequence of these precautions he had the happiness to admit into his clergy, many pupils of that house, among whom four were honored with the episcopal dignity.*

III

State of the Diocese of Quebec—Supremacy—First English Governors friendly to the Bishops—Sir Robert Shore Milnes—Royal Institution—M. Ryland—Projects against the liberty of the Catholic Clergy—Lord Castlereagh.

Considering the extent of his diocese, the difficulty of visiting it, the few priests put at his disposal, Mgr.

* The College of Nicolet furnished to the Church of Canada, Monseigneur Provancher, Cook, Baillargeon and Prince.

Plessis felt the immensity of the task imposed upon him, but he had entire confidence in the assistance of God.

"Examine the map," he wrote in 1806, to his agent at London, "and you will perceive the impossibility of a single Bishop, extending his solicitude with any success from Lake Superior to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. That space contains more than 200,000 catholics, and yet there are only 180 priests to supply all their wants. Add to that, the numerous difficulties, from their entanglement with a protestant population, and the constant vigilance necessary to avoid being compromised with a government, which views things only through the medium of its own principles, and is constantly making some new effort to establish the supremacy of the King."

Among the difficulties that the prelate mentioned in this letter, the worst of all were those raised by some public functionaries, who desired to bring the Catholic Church of Canada under subjection to the royal authority. His conscience would not permit him to make the least concession upon this ground, and he struggled against these efforts with so much wisdom and courage, that he finished by overthrowing all their projects.

To extend over Catholics, as over Protestants, the supremacy of the King in matters of religion, was the demand of the Governor's Council ever since 1763 ; they felt, in short, that side by side with the civil authority which they exercised, there existed a power of a superior order, which they desired to destroy, in order that they might be masters spiritually as well as temporally.

The Bishops had rejected these insulting pretensions, and as they were sustained by the clergy and the people, a violent struggle would have arisen between the Catholic population, and the Colonial Administration, if the Governors had not had the wisdom to repress the devices of their subaltern officers. Mgr. Briand made every effort to stand well with the Governors, and always addressed himself directly to them on matters of business, without ever allowing the heads of departments to intervene.

In 1775, Sir Guy Carleton declared publicly, that if the Province of Quebec had been preserved to Great Britain, it was owing to the Catholic Clergy. He testified his gratitude by allowing the Bishop to exercise his functions peaceably, and to dispose of the cures at his will, without having recourse to the royal instructions, which seemed to him to have been prepared only for the destruction of the catholic religion.*

The Bishops Hubert, D'Esgly and Denaut followed the footsteps of their predecessor, and had no occasion to repent it, for the Governors laid no restraint upon them, but permitted them to exercise their powers at will. Even after the arrival of Dr. Mountain, named by the King, Bishop of the English Church in the Province, Mgrs. Hubert, Denaut and Plessis, always used the title of Bishop of Quebec, in their public addresses, as well as in their private letters.

This gave great offence to Attorney General Sewell, to the Governor's Secretary, M. Ryland, but above all to the Anglican Bishop, who believed himself the titular bishop, and would recognize no other. Some of the English functionaries were so punctilious on this subject, that many times at public meetings they proclaimed loudly that they knew no other bishop at Quebec than Dr. Mountain ; and that they held as of no account the pretensions of a certain gentleman who assumed the same title. But the protestations of five or six gentlemen were of little importance while unsustained by the superior authority.

When Mgr. Denaut took possession of the bishopric in 1797, General Robert Prescott, Governor in Chief, begged him to transmit each year a list of the nominations to cures that had been made during the last twelve months, in order that he might be able to furnish an account of them to the ministry, if they should ask it ; he added, that for the rest the bishop would be perfectly free in his operations. General Prescott was recalled in 1799, and was replaced by Lieutenant-Governor Sir Robert Shore Milnes, who

* Letter of the Bishop of Quebec, May, 1807.

showed himself entirely devoted to the head of his church.

Then commenced a series of embarrassments, which increased day by day, and finished by threatening the liberty of the catholic worship. The designs of the chiefs of the coterie, were to annihilate the authority of the Bishop of Quebec, to nominate the curés, and to get the scholastic institutions into their own hands.

In 1801, they succeeded in obtaining from the Provincial Parliament, a law by which they hoped to accomplish the latter object. That law created a corporation under the name of "The Royal Institution for the encouragement of Public Instruction," and appeared to contain some liberal dispositions in favor of all classes of society. But it was not long before it was discovered that a snare had been very cleverly attempted. The board of directors, named by the government, were found to be nearly all protestants, and the president of the institution was no other than the Lord Bishop himself; so that the public instruction, in a province nearly all catholic, was placed entirely in the hands of protestants. The catholic clergy rose *en masse* against this corporation, and succeeded in preventing its working at the will of the authors of the project.

About the same time Dr. Mountain, addressing himself to Lord Hobart, the Colonial Secretary, asked permission to resign his charge, because the right of nomination to the cures was refused to him.

"While the Superintendant of the Roman Church," he wrote, "assumes the title of Bishop of Quebec, he, as well as his clergy, studiously deny that title to the Protestant Bishop; he has the absolute disposal of all the preferments in the diocese; he erects parishes, and grants dispensations for marrying at his discretion, &c., &c.; all which functions were clearly contrary to the Royal instructions, and all of which was denied to the Protestant Bishop."

In a letter bearing the initials of "Herman Witsius Ryland," the writer acknowledges frankly his hatred

against the Catholic Religion, and his design of overthrowing it in that Province.

"I come now," said he, "to what you mention concerning the popish clergy in this Province; I call them *popish* to distinguish them from the clergy of the Established Church, and to express my contempt and detestation of a religion which sinks and debases the human mind, and which is a curse to every country where it prevails. This being my opinion, I have long since laid it down as a principle (which in my judgment no Governor of this Province ought to lose sight of for a moment) by every possible means which prudence can suggest, gradually to undermine the authority and influence of the Roman Catholic Priests. This great, this highest object that a Governor here can have ; and may be accomplished before ten years shall have passed over"

"The instructions of his Majesty, by which it is ordered, that no person in this Province shall have the cure of souls, but by virtue of a license under the Governor's hand and seal; and these instructions once followed up, the King's supremacy would be established, the authority of the Pope would be abolished, and the country would become protestant."

"We have been mad enough to allow a company of French Rascals, to deprive us for the moment of the means of accomplishing all this; but one prudent decisive step might rectify this absurdity.—In all events I would advise every Governor of this province most scrupulously to follow the same line of conduct, which has established so widely the authority of the Popes of Rome, to avail themselves of every advantage that can possibly occur, and never to give up an inch but with the certainty of gaining an ell."*

* Christie, Vol. VI.—Letter of Mr. Ryland, 23rd December, 1804. Herman Witsius Ryland, Civil Secretary to many Governors, Clerk of the Executive Council and Legislative Councillor, born in 1760, at Northampton in England, of a family from Hanover, passed into Canada in the year 1793, in quality of Civil Secretary to Lord Dorchester. Prejudiced against the Catholic Religion and against everything that was French, he nourished all his life the project of imposing on the Catholic Church the yoke of the supremacy of the King of England, and of anglicizing the Canadians by coercive means. These did not wish to be anglicized either by gentleness

Though more moderate than Mr. Ryland, Attorney General Sewell was not better disposed to the Catholic religion. In 1804, he had in the course of a long memorandum upon the properties of the Seminary of Saint Sulpice of Montreal, come to the conclusion that they belonged to the King of England, who was the legitimate heir of the old proprietors. He recommended a life pension for the Ecclesiastics employed in that house, and destined their estate to public education, to the foundation of a University, or to any other object that the Imperial Parliament might recommend in its wisdom.

In open Court he had maintained that by the terms of the Capitulation of 1760, the definitive treaty of 1763, and the Act of Quebec of 1774, the Government alone had the right of erecting parishes ; that all those created since the conquest should be regarded as null and void, and that there existed no such thing as a Catholic Bishop of Quebec.

These opinions of the Attorney General, coming from a man who carried great weight before the Judges, and who was necessarily consulted by the Governor upon all questions of law, did the more harm, that he seemed animated, not so much by a spirit of hostility, as by a desire to maintain the spirit of the English constitution.

Sir Robert Milnes, was a mild and easy man, but had little love for the Catholic Religion ; having no great confidence in his own lights, he appeared to be guided by the opinions of those councillors who enjoyed his intimacy, and above all by the English Bishop to whom he was devoted.

Such were the dispositions of the most influential men in the Provincial government, when Mgr. Plessis became titular Bishop of Quebec.

By good fortune, Sir Robert Milnes was in England from the month of August of the year preceding, and

or by force. They resisted obstinately, and shipwrecked the projects of Mr. Ryland ; it is surprising, that this man who retired to Beauport in his latter years, lived in good intelligence with his Canadian neighbours, by whom he was esteemed. Mr. Ryland died at Beauport the 20th July, 1838, at the age of 78 years.

he had been followed by Dr. Mountain, who went to lay his complaints before the Ministers of His Britannic Majesty. Mr. Dunn, an old Merchant of Quebec, and first Executive Councillor, remained in charge of the administration of the Province during the absence of the Lieutenant Governor. Without listening to the representations of Mr. Ryland, the Administrator admitted Mgr. Plessis to take the oath of fidelity to the King under the title of Catholic Bishop of Quebec.

Still the Prelate feared the proceedings of the Lieutenant Governor at London, and the intrigues of the high functionaries in Canada.

Sir R. Milnes had offered the predecessor of Mgr. Plessis to procure for the Catholic Bishop of Quebec a civil existence, which was opposed in the Courts, where it was pretended that he was not recognized by the Government. Upon the reiterated invitations of the Lieutenant Governor, Mr. Denaut had forwarded a request, in which he begged the King to be pleased to accord civil existence to the Catholic Clergy of Canada ; determined at the same time not to accept that favor, as may be seen by his letters, if it was accompanied by any restrictions which might constrain the free exercise of the Episcopal authority. He distrusted the interest that Sir Robert Milnes and his intimate Councillors testified for the catholic cause ; and he was not wrong, for some advices received the following year, made him fear that the Court would take advantage of that demand, for imposing on the Church of Canada some unacceptable conditions.

"I apprehend with reason" wrote Mgr. Plessis in 1806, "that the Governor will not lose this occasion of gaining the authority for nominating to the cures, a system that the rules of our religion cannot admit. Now what would become of the discipline of a Diocese, and what weight would be the authority of the Bishop, if it was once known, that it was no longer him, but the secular power which disposed of ecclesiastical places? See how essential it is to go to the

source of the evil, and to prevent a state of things which would plunge the catholic religion of the Country into a dependance, from which it could never relieve itself. They offer the Bishop an estate and revenues: *hæc omnia tibi dabo si cadens adoraveris me* The secret will be, to obtain that the Catholic Bishop of Quebec be recognized, and authorized on some conditions compatible with the principles of the religion which he professes; for, if they wish to denude that religion of its principles, they would make of it a monster, and the protection that they pretend they would give it, is nothing more than a chimera. I expect from your zeal for the church of Jesus-Christ, that if any thing has been projected in that respect, you will work to turn it aside.”*

But in spite of the good will of Mr. Dunn, the Bishop felt that his position was very embarrassing; for he knew that the Government of the Province would soon pass into other hands. Would Sir Robert Milnes return? and if not, who would be his successor? could they expect a Governor more favorable to the catholic cause? These were the questions anxiously addressed to his London agent.

In 1807, he acknowledged to a friend, that all human resources failed him, in the struggle which he had to sustain for the defence of his church. He could scarcely hope for any advantages, in appealing to the Acts of capitulation or treaties of peace.

“The Capitulation of Montreal” he wrote “has given much power to a Government badly disposed; since, as you may see, they place us at the discretion of the King.

“If our fathers, a little more advised, had demanded that the clergy should present, when the bishopric would be vacant, two or three subjects, among whom, His Majesty could chose one for bishop, I am persuaded that the plan would have been acceded to without difficulty.

“But to believe that the King of France had by

* Letter to M. Bourret, priest, agent of the Bishop of Quebec at London, July, 1806—M. Bourret was a friend of Sir R. Milnes.

some particular act of grace, the choice of bishops, to ask that he should nominate to the bishoprics of a country, no longer under his domination, was an absurdity quite sufficient to cause the rejection of the third article of the capitulation, as has come to pass.

"It is very true that the treaty of peace of 1763, accords the free exercise of religion, inasmuch as it was compatible with the laws of Great Britain ; but that was at an epoch when the laws were very severe against catholics..... The Act of Parliament of 1774, in submitting the catholic church of this country to the royal supremacy, seemed to annihilate it *ipso facto*. "After all," adds the prelate, "need one be astonished, that malevolence should avail itself of so many advantages for establishing the reign of heresy upon the ruin of catholicism. Rather let us admire the ways of providence, which, in despite of the efforts of the devil, has preserved up to this time, to the catholic religion in Canada, a footing truly respectable, and worthy of being envied by the Church of France."

The bishop of Quebec was the only member of the catholic clergy who knew exactly the designs of the opposite party, but he dared not expose them to the public, for fear of doing more harm than good ; and he was therefore compelled to face the adversaries of his church single handed.

For asking the support of the catholic masses, it would have been necessary to have unveiled the projects of which they were ignorant, and to have unmasked some great personage ; on these accounts it was difficult to explain himself freely.

In the House of Assembly were to be found catholics endowed with energy and boldness, friends of their country, jealous of their civil rights, attached to their religion, and ready to defend it, if attacked on the floor of the House ; but they never dreamt of sustaining it at the foot of the throne, where it was then being attacked.

Among the well informed men upon whom Mgr. Plessis reckoned, not so much for that crisis as for

the future, was M. Denis Benjamin Viger, who was firmly attached to his religion. Unfortunately, he had not then reached that point of confidence with his compatriots that his merits warranted. In fact it was not till two or three years after, that is to say, in 1809, that he was elected a deputy of the Lower Chamber, and commenced that long parliamentary career, during which, he rendered such important services to his country.

Divine providence who watched over the little church of Canada, disposed every thing for the best, and found her defenders among those even who were opposed to the liberty of the catholics—" *Salutem ex inimicis nostris et de manu omnium qui oderunt nos.*"

The anglican bishop, who was still in England, had often visited the government offices during the course of 1808, and had frequent conferences with the ministry on the subject of the established church, which he desired to see as favored in Canada as it was in the mother country.

Nevertheless all the proceedings of Dr. Mountain remained unfruitful, as we may judge from the following extract of a memorandum in the handwriting of Lord Castlereagh.*

"The Canada Acts secure to the Catholics of Canada, the free exercise of their religion, and to their Clergy their accustomed dues and rights from persons of their persuasion, subject to H. M., supremacy, as established by the Act of Supremacy. The Supremacy asserted in that Act, is, that no foreign person, power or state shall exercise any spiritual jurisdiction in any of the dominions of the Crown. Now the Bishop of Quebec is not a foreigner; his clergy are not foreigners, he is the head of a religion, which may be freely exercised under the faith of Parliament, and he may claim the tithes and customary dues, and exercise all accustomed rights over Catholics. It would seem therefore, a very delicate

* Lord Castlereagh was then Minister of War. During the time that he was Secretary to Lord Camden, Viceroy of Ireland, he showed great severity towards his fellow country men, in consequence of the rebellion of 1798.

undertaking to interfere with the Catholic religion in Quebec, or to force the titular Bishop to drop his titles and act, not as Bishop, but only as Superintendent....”*

It is impossible to avoid astonishment, to find one who showed himself so inimical to the Catholic Clergy of Ireland, believing it his duty to act so liberally towards the Catholic Clergy of Canada. We presume, that in reflecting how near Canada was to the United States, Lord Castlereagh, then Minister of War, did not wish to give rise to any embarrassments in that Province; while at Washington a storm was brewing which threatened to burst over England and her American possessions. In short the people of the United States were then animated with an ardent desire to come to blows with England, the Americans were persuaded that a declaration of War would be the signal of a rising among the Canadians, whom they believed ready to join the troops of the Union. But such was not the opinion of the Government of Great Britain, who seems to have had at the moment great faith in the loyalty of the Canadians.

Lord Castlereagh was too able a man not to understand, that it was both useless and dangerous, to sustain the pretensions of the friends of Supremacy, at the risk of wounding the religious sentiments of a loyal population, ready to spill its blood in defence of its Country and its Institutions. Had Mgr. Plessis been informed of the limits put by the noble Lord to the Royal Supremacy, he would not have been so anxious touching the proceedings of Mr. Ryland and his friends.

IV

Arrival of Sir James Craig—Arbitrary Measures—Seizure of the Presses of the *Canadien*—Imprisonments—Proclamation—Suspensions against the loyalty of the Bishop.

On the 18th October, 1807, Sir James Henry Craig, the New Governor General, disembarked at Quebec. The ship had not yet cast anchor, when Mr. Ryland

* Manuscripts of the late Robert Christie, Esquire.

boarded her, and was assured of his post as Civil Secretary. These two men understood each other from the first, and some days after Mr. Ryland declared, that Sir James was just the person of whom the country stood in need.

Born at Gibraltar, of Scotch parents, James Henry Craig entered the English service in 1763, at the age of 15, and on many occasions distinguished himself by his courage. During the war of the American Revolution, he served in Canada, and was present at the unfortunate affair at Saratoga. For many years he suffered from dropsy, which had made great progress when he arrived in Canada, and confined him to his apartments many days after his landing.

In his first interviews with the Bishop of Quebec, Sir James was very mild and very civil. As M. de Bouvens had seen him many times in London, and had given hopes that he would be favorable to the catholic cause, it was reasonable to suppose, that his Government would at least, be worth that of Sir Robert Milnes ; but experience undeceived the Canadians.

The following is the character, as drawn by Mr. Christie, of that man whose administration left such sad souvenirs in our country : " His physiognomy was agreeable, his carriage imposing, his deportment manly and full of dignity. Sociable, polished and affable, he was nevertheless absolute in his opinions, and high handed in his measures. Though of an irritable character....he reconciled himself easily with those who had incurred his displeasure. Hospitable and magnificent in his way of life, he showed himself liberal in his gifts to public institutions, and to works of charity ; and we must add, that he was the friend of the poor and the necessitous, of whom, none were ever sent away without receiving some aid."

Left to himself, and directed by his own lights, General Craig would have made a good Governor. Unfortunately, being a stranger to the people and to the Country, he turned for instruction and advice to

the men who composed his Council, or to those whose official duties connected them with him. Now these public functionaries had no community of interests with the mass of the inhabitants, from whom they differed, in religion, in language, and in origin. Nominated by the Court to their offices, they considered themselves as independent of every other authority, but that of the Secretary of State for the colonies; and exercised an arbitrary power over the people, on whose substance they fattened. Their power became so formidable, that a Governor on arriving in the Province had either to place himself in their hands, or be crushed by their opposition, and recalled to England.

They easily secured the mind of General Craig, gaining his confidence, inspiring him with their own ideas and their prejudices, and isolating him completely, from those who would have been able to explain to him the true state of things. Without suspecting it, that man so proud became a docile instrument, handled by his counsellors according to their will.

Under their direction, he was taught to see only demagogues and revolutionists in the representatives of the people. So that in his public speeches, he addressed them with a hauteur, only calculated to sour them. The dissolution of the House of Assembly in 1809 and 1810, completed their exasperation against his Government.

Le Canadien, a journal established to sustain the interests of the people, strongly assailed the abuses of the administration; sometimes, however, it exceeded the bounds of moderation and prudence, and published articles which might be distorted by the enemies of the Canadian people. On the other hand, the friends of General Craig spoke mysteriously of troubles, of secret conspiracies, of projects of revolt. These rumours had no real foundation, and were repelled as false by the chiefs of the Canadian party; but they served the views of the Bureaucracy, who were well pleased to engage the Governor in some Coup d'état preliminary to the elections.

The devices of the Councillors succeeded ; on the 17th March, 1810, some soldiers led by a Magistrate and two Constables, received an order to seize the office of *Le Canadien* ; the presses and all the papers were taken and placed in the vaults of the Court House ; the publisher of the journal, and three members of the House of Assembly were imprisoned. The guards were doubled and patrolled the City in every direction ; but this great display of precaution and strength ended in nothing ; for no fact was discovered upon which any accusation against the prisoners could be based.

While General Craig believed that he was walking upon a Volcano ; the very idea of the presence of danger had aroused his haughty humor, and excited his natural impetuosity. On the 20th of August, he issued a proclamation, in which he enumerated and condemned the pretended projects of that Rebellion, which he thought he perceived in all parts of the Province ; he advised the people to distrust the false reports spread against the Government ; he exhorted the magistrates and ecclesiastics to enlighten the people, and to inculcate in them principles of loyalty towards the King, and obedience to the laws of the country.

It was with a lively anxiety that the Bishop of Quebec had followed the progress of the struggle. On the one hand, he dreaded to see the authorities despised, on the other, he was far from approving all the measures of the Executive Council, and distrusted the intentions of many of the members of that body. The fear that they affected to experience, appeared to him caused by false informations, it might even, he thought, be the effect of some political scheme of those functionaries. His embarrassment increased when he heard accusations of disloyalty made against a part of his Clergy, whose sentiments of fidelity towards the Sovereign he was well acquainted with.

In a sitting of the Executive Council, at which Mgr. Plessis was invited to assist ; General Craig declared to him, " that the disaffection occasioned among the

people by *Le Canadien* had reached such a point, that a general rising could not have been prevented, if he had deferred taking the most energetic measures for arresting the effect of the malignant insinuations spread by that paper; that one of the means of restoring order and dissipating the disloyal impressions already very deeply entertained, was to engage the Catholic Clergy to declare for the authorities in the most formal manner." He added, that a great number of Curés encouraged openly the publication of *Le Canadien* by their subscriptions, and that it was in the Presbyteries, and around the churches, that they exalted its principles.

But if the incriminated journal had by times been too hasty in some articles, it was not less the defender of the constitutional rights accorded to the people by Great Britain; it endeavoured to undermine the position occupied by the adversaries of the religion and the institutions of the colony. It was therefore not surprising, if the members of the Catholic Clergy should pronounce in favor of that vigorous champion, while disapproving all that was imprudent in its columns.

The proclamation of the Governor was sent to all the Curés, and was accompanied by a circular letter, in which the Bishop recommended them to read it to their parishioners after the morning service.

The Prelate was too well acquainted with the dispositions of his diocesans, to allow himself to be deceived by the imaginary fears of General Craig and his councillors. Still, in order to set aside all suspicion of his own loyalty, as well as that of his clergy, he directed the latter to administer such advice as would calm the minds, and recall the too zealous patriot to the rules of moderation.

None of the members of the Executive Council deemed it advisable to reproach him with having taken the title of Bishop of Quebec in that circular; but a few months after, when the chiefs of the party thought that the curés had not sustained them in the elections, they tried to raise a new storm against the bishop, on account of that same title.

Mgr. Plessis seems to have had a presentiment of that attack, for at the commencement of July, 1810, he wrote in these terms to his friend, Mr. Adam Lymburner, then in England :*

"The Parliament of Lower Canada has been dissolved for the second time, in the course of last winter, but the elections, made immediately after the dissolution, have not been favorable to the views of the government. There has been a singular state of things, much party warmth, boasting and irritation. The government has been badly treated, both by its friends and its enemies. I have written to my clergy in order that they might recommend to the faithful, obedience, submission, and the greatest respect for the executive power. Most of the curés have perfectly fulfilled my wishes. The courtisans, however, have not deemed this sufficient: they wanted the clergy to present an address to the Governor, to felicitate him on the breaking up of the House. It did not seem reasonable to me, that the clergy should put themselves forward to approve that step, since they are total strangers to legislation, and have other means more proper to serve authority; means which they use whenever necessity calls for them. However that may be, I perceive that umbrage has been taken at the Castle, and I shall be in nowise astonished if they seize this occasion for blackening the clergy before the Imperial ministry.

"The revenues enjoyed by our curés, the authority of the Catholic Bishop over them and over the people, have been a long time objects of jealousy. But I hope all from the providence of the God that I serve, and that I try to make my diocesans serve, by inspiring them with such sentiments as should penetrate their hearts, whether as christian or as subjects."

He explained himself more clearly upon this subject in a letter to M. de Bouvens, on the 21st Novem-

* Mr. Adam Lymburner, born in Scotland, was one of the principal merchants of Canada, where, in 1776, he came to carry on the business of his brother. He was an able man and knew how to win the esteem of those with whom he came in contact. In 1791, he was called before the House of Commons, while they were discussing the Bill which was to give a Constitution to Canada. He died at London, in 1836, at the age of 90.

ber. After having announced to him the departure of Mr. Ryland for England, he added : " In March last there was some noise here on the subject of a periodical journal called "*Le Canadien*," which was a little in the style of Cobbett, that is to say, much too *prononcé* against the proceedings of the provincial government.

" This incident moved the heads of the demagogues, and still more those of the pretended royalists. There were also time servers, who thought this a favorable moment for the advancement of their schemes, at the expense of their fellow countrymen. After having thrown blame upon the people, they attacked the clergy, and questioned their loyalty. These indiscretions gave room for suspicions, which my sincere attachment to the government has not been able entirely to dissipate.

" The Governor in Chief has deputed to England his first secretary, Mr. Ryland, for political purposes. He has gone loaded with memoranda, among which, I shall not be surprised, if he has some, very unfavorable to the inhabitants of the country generally, and perhaps very calumnious against the clergy."

We see by this last extract, that some Canadian employés had profited by the circumstances, to raise doubts about the loyalty of their fellow countrymen, in order to recommend themselves to the good graces of those who distributed the favors of Government. The flatterers of power were then very few, and never in such numbers as prevented the administration from appearing truly hostile to the mass of the inhabitants of the country. At that epoch, as to day, the Canadians were often divided among themselves upon questions of little importance ; but then, as now, when some strangers' hand was raised against the old institutions of the country, with few exceptions all were ready to combat and repel the common enemy.

It is this unanimity among our fellow countrymen in the hour of a common danger, which has maintained them up to this day, upon their native soil,

with the language, the religion, and the laws which they have received from their fathers ; it is this which has been under divine providence our safeguard since more than a century.

The experience of the past may well reassure us for the future, and convince us that harmony will be renewed among us whenever an important occasion demands it.

V

Mr. Ryland is sent to England—Object of his mission—Accusation against the Bishop of Quebec—Disposition of the English Ministry—Mr. Robert Peel—Interview of the Governor with Mgr. Plessis—Departure of Sir James Craig—Missions in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Towards the end of the month of June, 1810, Mr. Ryland left for England with ample instructions from Sir James Craig ; he was to ask the English Ministry to change the constitution of Lower Canada, or at least, to suspend it ; to accord to the Governor the nomination to the Cures of Quebec ; to place the property of the Jesuits, and of the Sulpicians, at the disposal of the Provincial Government, who would thus become independent of Parliament. The second article appeared of great importance to General Craig ; he complained to the Ministry of having no relations with the Cures, who formed a powerful body, and enjoyed according to him, an immense influence over the people. That influence he believed would have been enjoyed by the Governor if they had accorded to him the right of nominating to Cures, according to his own good pleasure.

The programme confided to Mr. Ryland previous to his departure, was quite enough to occupy him fully ; but another matter yet, was placed in his hands a little after his arrival in England, of which the following will explain the nature. In the month of October, 1810, Mgr. Plessis took occasion, on learning the imprisonment of Pope Pius VII at Savone, to publish an address in which he invited the faithful to pray for the Holy Father. Following the practice of

his predecessors, as he had already done on many similar occasions, he attached to his address, his Title of Bishop of Quebec. The Governor, Dr. Mountain the Anglican Bishop, and his friends professed to be seriously offended; they had already forgotten the Circular of the month of March preceding, and proclaimed that Mgr. Plessis had attempted a dangerous innovation. Nominated by his Sovereign, the Anglican Bishop imagined that his royal patent interdicted Mgr. Plessis from taking the title, that the Catholic Bishops of Quebec had borne for more than 150 years.

"We have been praying for the deliverance of the Pope here," wrote General Craig to Mr. Ryland, "I enclose you a copy of the Bishop's "*Mandement*," which you may show at the office, as an instance of the complete *independence* which is assumed. It was not even mentioned to me, either before it was issued or since. We have reason to suspect that through the means of Dr. Milner, with whom Plessis certainly corresponds, there is a communication with the Catholic Bishops in Ireland, who I have no doubt, will instigate this man to resist to the utmost the acknowledgment of the King's supremacy. There is a young man of the name of Christie,[†] who served his Clerkship with Bowen, and who has just received his commission to act as a Barrister. This young man is going home immediately, and without one possible motive personal to himself, that can be assigned for his doing so.... He is very intimate with Plessis, and we strongly suspect that he is going home as an agent of his, for some purpose or other, probably to communicate more intimately than they choose to do by letter, with Milner and the Irish Bishops."

One can hardly understand how a serious man like General Craig, could lend himself to such absurdities. He was not however, the only one then busy with the *mandement* of Mgr. Plessis, as may be seen by the

* Letter of 6th November, 1810.

† M. Christie who has published the letters of Craig and Ryland, put under this passage the following note: "Bishop Plessis was a benevolent and worthy man, but never confided that mission, or any other, to the young man here spoken of."

following letter written by Mr. Ryland to Mr. Peel,* then Under-Secretary of State :

" I have recently received from the Roman Catholic Bishop of Quebec, both a printed and a written copy of a Papal *Mandement* of the Rev. J. O. Plessis, dated 25th October, 1810, which carries on the face of it so gross a violation of the rights and prerogatives of the Crown, connected with Lower Canada, that I persuade myself I shall be justified in transmitting one of the copies to you, for the purpose of its being laid before the Earl of Liverpool."

" The Bishop in a private letter mentions that he has no doubt the paper will be submitted to His Majesty's Ministers by the Governor in Chief, but that he is apprehensive the ill state of General Craig's health may induce him to delay writing upon the subject. . . . It is so immediately connected with the measure proposed by the Governor, relative to the assumption of the patronage of the Romish Church, that I have ventured in a separate paper to suggest the advantage which might arise from the Governor's being furnished with the opinion of the law officers of the Crown on the case. Not that I entertain the most distant idea of matters being carried to such lengths, as to render it advisable that a suit should be instituted in the Kings Courts in Lower Canada against Mr. Plessis, for the illegal assumptions of powers as titular Bishop of Quebec ; but I think it might be of the utmost consequence to be able, at any time, to prove to him the illegality of his conduct, and the power which the Crown has over him, if driven to the necessity of exercising it ; and I am fully persuaded that an intimation of the kind would be the strongest possible motive with a man of his stamp and character, to submit himself to His Majesty's pleasure."

In the memorandum which accompanied this letter, Mr. Ryland, after having referred to the Royal instructions, and to the articles of treaty, touching the exercise of the Catholic religion ; showed the officers of the

* Afterwards Sir Robert Peel ; this letter is dated 11th February, 1819

Crown, that M. Plessis had published without the consent of the Governor General, an address in which he had arrogated to himself the title of Bishop of Quebec by the Grace of the Holy Apostolic See, and as a consequence of this grave accusation, he put these three questions.

First.—Whether, under the circumstances of the case, the Revd. M. Plessis, by issuing and circulating the *mandement* above mentioned, and publicly taking upon himself the style, title and authorities therein set forth, does render himself liable to a criminal prosecution for the same?

Secondly.—Under what Statute or Statutes an action in this case might be brought into the Provincial Court of King's Bench? and

Thirdly.—To what penalty or penalties the said M. Plessis might be subject if prosecuted to conviction.

(Signed,) "H. W. R."

One may judge from the preceding, with what good will Mr. Ryland and his friends entered into that affair. Fortunately, the English Ministry had broader and more liberal ideas than General Craig and his Counsellors, who believed themselves still living in the times of Cromwell.

Lord Liverpool refused to change the constitution of Canada, or to suspend it; he knew that the discussion of such a question, if it was introduced before the Imperial Parliament, would excite violent attacks against the Ministry, who had already trouble enough to maintain themselves. As to the other two propositions, as they exacted no intervention from Parliament. The Colonial Secretary, while declaring that he wished to lead the Colonies by conviction and not by force, prepared at the same time a project of instructions for the Governor of Canada. The following was their bases: they would consent to take the property of Saint Sulpice on certain conditions, and place it, together with that of the Jesuits, in the hands of the Executive, who would thereby become independent of Parliament; they would recognize the civil existence of the Roman Catholic Bishop as well as the

Cures, on condition that the Governor exercised the rights of the Crown over them, and over their parishes; an effective way, certainly, of establishing the Royal supremacy, that is to say: they would hand over to the favorites of the Governor the power of regulating ecclesiastical affairs. So Mr. Ryland admired the wisdom and liberality of these measures. But the Lord Chancellor, it seems, did not see matters in the same light, for having been consulted on the justice of these propositions, Lord Eldon *inspired* the Colonial Secretary with some scruples, which *pour le moment* as was said, arrested the whole project; and God be thanked, nobody had afterwards the unhappy courage to take it up again.

As to the suits which they wished to enter against the Bishop of Quebec, none of the officers of the Imperial Government thought proper to busy themselves about them. On this subject Mr. Peel gave Mr. Ryland great trouble and anxiety, and that gentleman therefore expressed his conviction, that though a young man of agreeable manners and great talents, the Under-Secretary understood nothing of Canadian affairs. Mr. Peel had always some flattering words for the envoy of General Craig, but he never allowed himself to be convinced by him. When Mr. Ryland told him that all the English party supported the Governor, "*very good*," replied the other, "but the Canadians are so much more numerous than the English," a remark that he repeated many times, and in such a way as to give Mr. Ryland to understand that he did not wish to go against the prejudices of the most considerable part of the inhabitants. On another occasion, Mr. Peel, to the great scandal of his interlocutor, asked, whether if instead of throwing the Editors of the *Canadien* into a prison, it would not have been better to have gained them over by more mild proceedings?

Twice Mr. Ryland had written to Mr. Peel about the *mandement* of the Catholic Bishop; great then was the former gentleman's surprise, when he found that the statesman had completely forgotten these

two letters, and confounded them with a request, in which Dr. Mountain had asked a sum of money to finish his cathedral.*

The good sense of the ministry finally did justice to that miserable chicane, and buried it in such profound forgetfulness, that nobody any more dared to undertake the task of bringing the bishop before the courts of justice.

While Mr. Ryland saw all his projects thus vanishing one after the other, his protector, General Craig, prepared to leave a country, where his despotic administration had made him so odious to the mass of the people, and had caused such an extreme agitation through the extent of the province.

Before quitting Canada, he desired to draw from Mgr. Plessis, some kind of a response, however little favorable to the royal supremacy ; he was not aware that the prelate, always so ready to render to authority all that his sense of duty dictated, could never be made to cede aught of that which he knew belonged to God.

"I have lately had some conversation with Plessis," writes Sir James Craig, "relative to his situation, and that of the clergy.... He expressed a wish that it was finished.... He told me that he was to go to Three Rivers a day or two after, and requested to defer entering into it more particularly till his return. Whether he consulted Noiseux or Calonne, or both, I know not ; but when he returned I found him entirely changed, for his conscience would by no means permit him even to consent to the crown nominating to the livings. I immediately told him that it was unnecessary to continue any further conversation, as

* "This cathedral," Mr. Ryland tells us in one of his letters, "was built without any application to parliament. "Upon this subject I may observe, that I should not suppose an application to parliament is absolutely necessary, for if I recollect right, the Metropolitan Church at Quebec was wholly built without any legislative interference, and merely upon a letter from the Secretary of State, for the time being, authorizing the completion of the buildings. The whole expense amounted to about £18,000, and was paid by the Governor's warrants, on the Receiver General, but of course this expenditure was not laid before the House of Assembly, though included in the public accounts, that are yearly transmitted to the Lords of His Majesty's Treasury."

that was a matter which did not rest *upon his assent or denial. The right actually existed in the Crown, and would most assuredly sooner or later be resumed.* Our conversation did, however, continue two hours and a half, but we parted without either engaging the other to change.... We have parted very good friends.... I have probably seen the last of him, for he sailed yesterday on a tour round the Gulf of St. Lawrence."

The following is the account given of the same interview addressed by Mgr. Plessis to M. Roux, his grand vicaire :

"I had yesterday a conversation with His Excellency the Governor, which lasted one hour and three quarters, in which he exhausted himself and me also, in speaking, without our being able to fall into accord upon the only point that was agitated, to wit, the nomination to cures. He viewed it obstinately as a civil affair, and as a prerogative of the Crown, which it would never abandon, and which he maintained had been exercised from all time by the Kings of France and England, even before the *Reformation* of the church in the latter kingdom. I tried to make him understand the essential difference, between the patronage exercised over certain benefices, whether by the King, or by private persons, and the canonical institution, which could only proceed from the church, and without which, all the commissions or nominations of sovereigns and other patrons, would be of no effect. I explained to him what was meant in the French ecclesiastical law, by the rights of "*régale*" or royalty, that the King of France exercised over all the benefices of the vacant diocese, the greatest authority to which he could pretend, and yet conferred no cures, the collation to which was reserved to the chapter of the cathedral.

I added, that the right of the Bishops upon that point, was so well established, that Bonaparte had been obliged to recognize it by an express article in the Concordat ; that the example which he cited of the Anglican Bishops who conferred no cure, told for

nothing with us ; that the Catholic Church had always given to its Bishops more power than the Anglican Church conferred on its own ; that nobody could be more submissive than myself, or better disposed to the Government ; that it was a general principle with me to second its views in every thing that wounded not my conscience, but that it forbid me to go beyond that ; that I felt more than any body my unpleasant position, in occupying a place that was not acknowledged civilly, and of living there in poverty ; but that I would willingly submit to greater privations, rather than take any steps which would discredit me before my clergy and my people. That a sale of my episcopacy, especially if there should result to me some additional revenue, would be against the dictates of my conscience, and be considered a treason to the church.

That having done as much as my predecessors for the service of Government, I expressed a hope that the Governor did not desire to treat me worse than my predecessors ; and further, that I would try more and more to deserve his protection, not so much for myself, as for the faithful, in whose salvation I interested myself ; that divine providence would bring, without doubt, more favorable circumstances, &c. We disputed much, but the Governor was not angry and we parted at last, little satisfied with each other."

Mgr. Plessis regarded the influence of Sir J. Craig with the English Government as much more considerable than it really was. The threats of the Governor had imposed upon him, and he regarded them as the warnings of an approaching prosecution, perhaps even, a refusal to perpetuate the Catholic Episcopacy in the Province. The Bishop was far from suspecting that affairs were going to take quite a different turn.

These two men never saw each other again ; on the 4th of June, Mgr. Plessis left Quebec for a visit to the Magdalen Islands and the Bay of Chaleur ; on the 19th of the same month, the Governor General embarked for England, to the general satisfaction of all Canadians, who had been so long subjected to his

caprices and his despotism. His health at the time was so bad, that he had little hope of surviving the passage. He lived however, some time longer and died in the month of January of the following year.*

The arbitrary administration of Sir James Craig weighed heavily upon the old inhabitants of the Country; a veteran officer who had fought against the French during many long years, he had accustomed himself to regard as enemies, all those who held to France by their origin and their language; a settled distrust of them took possession of his mind, and he could not admit the possibility of their attachment to British Institutions. A small knot of party men, nursed and increased the prejudices of a man, rendered sour and suspicious by sickness, and who was only accustomed to command soldiers.

A law passed in 1803, unfortunately, favored his inclinations to despotism. Adopted at a period, when rumour attributed to the Agents of the French Government, a desire to foment discontent in the Country; it confided extraordinary powers to the hands of the Governor and his Councillors. Upon an order signed by three members of the Executive Council, the most honest persons could be arrested and thrown into prison under a secret accusation of "high treason, concealment of high treason, or suspicion of high treason." Those who had thus been incarcerated enjoyed none of the privileges of *habeas corpus* and could only be liberated upon the order of the Governor.

Mgr. Plessis, finding himself, as well as the entire priesthood, exposed to the caprices of a restless and irritable man; did every thing in his power to avert the storm that so unceasingly threatened them; to maintain that state of peace so necessary to his church, and to preserve his flock from political agitation and the horrors of a civil war. By prudence and moderation he indulged the hope of preserving such a position, as would enable him to act the part of

* General Craig was only 62 years old when he died. Mgr. Plessis died precisely at the same age, thirteen years later.

mediator, in the event of any unfortunate collision between the executive and the people. He was therefore, ever on his guard to avoid a rupture with Sir James Craig, and he was even reproached with having ceded too easily to some exigencies of the Governor, during the quarrels between the Executive and the House of Assembly. But while he recoiled before the political struggle, the moment that it became a question of sustaining the rights of religion and the church, he was immovable and would rather have lost his life, than have consented to any unjust pretensions on the part of the adversaries of catholicism.

VI

Sir George Prevost—Memorial upon the church of Canada.

The anxieties of the Bishop of Quebec were a little diminished after the departure of Sir James Craig; but they had not completely vanished, for he had still to fear the result of the voyage of Mr. Ryland. The transfer of Sir George Prevost from the Government of Nova-Scotia to that of Canada, and his speedy arrival, was now announced. The Grand vicar Burke, who had known him well at Halifax, spoke favorably of him. "I am glad to hear you say such kind things of the new Governor," replied Mgr. Plessis; "it will be fortunate if he does not allow himself, as his predecessors have done, to be circumvented by persons interested to ill use the catholics."

These apprehensions were not without some foundation, for notwithstanding his desire to please the Canadians, Sir George Prevost entertained the same views as his predecessor, touching the existence and authority of a Catholic Bishop in Canada; in fact, upon that subject, he appeared to be guided at first by the counsels of the old advisers of General Craig.

However, in the spring of that year, the Governor made new propositions. Mgr. Plessis who, the pre-

ceding year, had visited a part of the gulf of Saint-Lawrence, was about to resume his labors and to visit the missions of Prince Edward's Island, Nova-Scotia, and a part of New-Brunswick, when General Prevost forwarded him the following communication. "I have received some despatches from England ; it is desired to place you upon a more respectable footing, but it is expected that you will yourself lay down the conditions. I should desire to have your ideas upon the above before your departure for the Gulf, for it is necessary to provide against every thing, and to have a good understanding."

"Before my departure" replied the Bishop, "I shall have the honor of placing in the hands of Your Excellency a memorandum containing my ideas and my principles. I am obliged to declare beforehand, that no temporal offer can induce me to renounce any part of my spiritual jurisdiction. That jurisdiction is not mine, I merely hold it as a deposit for the church, which I am in no wise permitted to dissipate and of which I must render a good account."

Mgr. Plessis hastened to prepare a memorial, which he presented on the 15th day of May, and a few days after entered upon his visitation. That document furnishes such interesting details upon the Church of Canada, and explains so clearly the position in which it was then placed, that it naturally finds its place here. "The memorial which follows" says the author, "has for its object to show : 1st What the Bishops were in Canada before the conquest of the Colony ; 2nd That which they have been since the conquest ; 3rd The position it would be proper for them to occupy for the future...."

After having given some details relating to the old Bishops, he adds :

"These six first Bishops were born in France. The Bishops of Quebec being upon the same footing as those of France, these prelates were named by a brevet of the King, and confirmed by Bulls of the Apostolical See, after examination made of their faith and of their morals in conformity with the Concordat.

".... The revenues of the Bishop consisted partly of gratifications from the Clergy of France, and partly from three Abbeys, the proceeds of which he shared with his chapter. It does not appear that the total revenue of the Bishop had ever exceeded eight thousand francs..... worth to-day twelve hundred louis and perhaps more.

"2. Since the conquest, the liberty of the Catholic Worship having been accorded to the inhabitants of Canada (*pour subsister en son entier*), by article 17th of the capitulation of Montreal in 1760, and by article IV of the definitive treaty of peace in 1763, the continuation of the pastoral ministry was necessarily comprised in that concession. The Catholic Religion could not subsist without Clergy. It was then a necessity to the new subjects of His Britannic Majesty, that they should have priests, to announce to them the word of God, to administer to them the Sacraments, and other spiritual aids, and a Bishop to ordain these priests, and to govern spiritually the Clergy and the people of the Colony.

Article 30 of the capitulation of Montreal, by which it was demanded that the King of France should continue to name the Bishop of Canada, was justly negatived ; but no other mode of nomination having been adopted, the Chapter of the Cathedral considered itself in possession of the Ancient Right, according to which the Bishop was elected by the Clergy of the vacant church, and confirmed by the Metropolitans or by the Pope, under the good pleasure of the Sovereign."

"In consequence, M. Jean Olivier Briand, one of the Canons and Vicar General during the vacancy of the See, was elected Bishop of Quebec by an *Acte Capitulaire*, dated the 11th September, 1764, and furnished with the recommendation of Governor James Murray, whose confidence he had deserved,... he passed into Europe the same year, and obtained Bulls from the Holy See, was consecrated in the spring of 1766, and returned to Canada the same year. After having in his new quality taken the oath.

of allegiance, to the representative of the King, he exercised all the functions, with as much liberty, as he would have been able to do under the old regime, and received constantly on the part of different Governors, testimonials of a distinguished consideration."

"The Episcopal Palace of Quebec had been considerably damaged by the bombardment of the City in 1759. M. Briand becoming Bishop repaired it, out of his own savings, under the eyes of the Provincial Government, who not only found no fault, but took it on lease in 1778, to place in it the Provincial Secretary's and other public offices. That lease exists still, and brings annually to the Bishop one hundred and fifty pounds sterling. Three years before, to wit, in 1775, the Government accorded to the same Bishop a pension of two hundred pounds sterling, which his successors have continued to receive : so that their total revenue was three hundred and fifty pounds sterling only ; for the French revolution deprived them of two hundred and fifty pounds sterling, which had been conserved out of their old revenue in France."

"Forseeing the difficulties which would accompany the change of Bishops, and above all the expenses of the voyage, if each one as elected should have to pass over to Europe for episcopal consecration ; M. Briand acquainted the Court of Rome and General Guy Carleton, afterwards Lord Dorchester, and then Governor of the Province of Quebec, with the project he had conceived of giving himself a coadjutor, *cum futura successione*. He agreed with the Governor that this dignity should be conferred upon M. Louis Maricheau Desgly ! one of the Canadian priests of his Clergy, for which he obtained Bulls from the Holy See, by virtue of which he consecrated him at Quebec, the 12th July, 1772, under the title of Bishop of Dorylee."

"Since that time the Bishop of Quebec has always had a coadjutor ; proposed by himself, accepted by the representative of the King in this Province, ad-

mitted to the oath of allegiance by the Governor in Council, confirmed by Bulls from the Court of Rome upon the postulation of the Bishop, and testimony of the Clergy, consecrated in the Province itself, and ready to succeed the Bishop in case of death or resignation, and sworn in anew, when his turn came to occupy the Episcopal See."

"Thus M. Briand having resigned towards the end of 1782, after 18 years of episcopacy, M. Desgly succeeded him, and had for coadjutor M. Jean François Hubert, under the title of Bishop of Almire."

"After the death of M. Desgly, in 1788, M. Hubert had successively two coadjutors, to wit: M. Charles François Bailly, titular Bishop of Capse, deceased in 1794, and M. Pierre Denaut, titular of Canathe, in favor of whom he resigned in 1797."

"Under the same title of Canathe, the undersigned became coadjutor of M. Denaut, and succeeded him at his death, which took place at the beginning of 1806, and accepted for his coadjutor M. Bernard Claude Panet, consecrated in the spring of 1807, under the title of Salde in the Mauritanie....."

"It is very well known that the Bishops of Quebec do not pretend to exercise any other than spiritual authority over the Catholic subjects of their diocese; and neither their jurisprudence, nor their titles, were ever contested till these latter years; when some insinuations artfully spread through the public papers, and some assertions advanced in the Courts of justice of this province, began to throw over the exercise and even over the existence of the Catholic Episcopate of Canada, certain clouds, calculated to deprive these prelates of the influence which is necessary to them, whether for the conduct of their flock, whether for the success of services which the Government of His Majesty might expect from them for the maintenance of good order, or for the security of the province in moments of trouble or of invasion."

"It is true, that notwithstanding these attempts, the first of which were tried but ten years ago....., there is really no sensible difference in the condition

of the Catholic Bishops, from that which they held before the conquest, except that they have no longer a chapter, nor officiality, nor entrance to the Council; and that their revenues are found to be very much below what the circumstances of the times and their dignity would seem to exact. But we cannot conceal, that they are now exposed to many obstacles, whether in their private transactions, or in the exercise of their public functions, and it is not possible that this state of things can exist much longer, without further deterioration, unless some prompt remedy be applied.

3rdly. For the future.—The spiritual powers to be exercised by the Bishop of Quebec should come from the church by way of the Sovereign Pontiff. He is not permitted to despoil himself of them, either in whole, or in part, nor to draw them from any other source. But the spiritual functions have certain exterior and civil effects, and it is only in relation to these civil and exterior effects, that he feels the necessity of being authorized to continue the functions of his predecessors, in the same principles, and with the same deference for the established authorities, in such a way, that he may not meet with those shackles which disturb the liberty that he and his predecessors have enjoyed up to this day and do not procure any advantage to the government.

“ He desires then, that he and his successors be civilly recognized as Roman Catholic Bishops of Quebec; having under their Episcopal jurisdiction, all the catholic subjects of His Majesty, established in the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick; and in the Islands of Cape Breton, Prince Edward and the Magdeleines; and that the said Bishops may enjoy in an acknowledged manner, the rights and prerogatives up to the present exercised without interruption, by those who preceded them in the government of the church of Canada, and further, that the property of the Episcopal Palace be confirmed to the Roman Catholic Bishops of Quebec, and that they may transmit to the Bishops, their successors, the

acquisitions which they may have made in that quality.

"Ever occupied with the care of his church, the undersigned believes it to be his duty to limit his desires within these bounds.

"As to the influence that any assignment of revenue might give to his office, which would permit him to serve more efficaciously the government of His Majesty....also as to the utility there might be in a country of which at least 39 out of 40 are catholics, to let the clergy of that communion be represented by its chief in the Executive and Legislative Councils, these are objects which he would know how to prize; that he would receive with gratitude, if they were offered; but upon which, he will nevertheless abstain from making any particular demand, relying fully on the recognized benevolence and wisdom of your Excellency.

(Signed), JOSEPH OCTAVE PLESSIS."

This memorial was of a nature to leave a favorable impression on the mind of Sir George Prevost, who was naturally benevolent, and whose position also, engaged him to render justice to the Catholic Clergy. The Bishop of Quebec had evidently some hopes that Governor Prevost would enfranchise himself from the yoke of the Councillors of Sir James Craig; he flattered himself also the more, that the fall of the English Ministry, regarded as probable, would leave the Prince Regent at liberty to follow the favorable inclinations which were attributed to him on behalf of the interests of the catholics of the empire. But another cause brought about a very sensible amelioration in the position of the catholic church of Canada.

Mgr. Plessis left the 20th May, to continue his pastoral visit around the Gulf of St. Lawrence; he had travelled over the Acadian Villages, and the Scotch settlements of the Island of St. John, when he heard that the American Republic had declared war against Great Britain, and had already commenced hostilities. Not wishing to interrupt his journey, he visited, in

spite of the danger which he ran from the enemies' cruisers, a part of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick; and returned to Canada through the interior of the Country, enduring all the hardships of a path, which is to day scarcely practicable to any other than Indians.

VII

American war—Services rendered by the Clergy and Militia of Canada—Letters of Lord Bathurst—The title of Roman Catholic Bishop of Quebec recognized in Public Acts—Departure of Sir George Prevost—Sir Gordon Drummond—Journeys of the Bishop of Quebec into Nova Scotia and Upper Canada—He is named Legislative Councillor.

The entire Colony was under arms. On the 18th June preceding, the American Congress had declared war against Great Britain, and the troops of the Union had already tried to penetrate into the Province. In presence of the dangers which threatened the Country, the Government had made an appeal to the loyalty of the Canadians, those same Canadians who had been represented by governor Craig as ready to revolt and ally themselves with the American Republic. General Prevost, on the contrary, did not hesitate to confide to them the defence of Canada; his hopes were not deceived, for from all quarters, the people rose to resist the invaders of their Country.

In the name of the Canadian population, the House of Assembly replied nobly to the appeal of the Governor :

“ Your Excellency” said they “ may repose entirely upon the good spirit which animates the subjects of His Majesty in this Province; their attachment to the religion of their fathers, their loyalty towards their Sovereign, their ardent love for the true interests of the Country are such powerful motives, that the enemy cannot intimidate them by his threats, nor deceive them by his insidious efforts.”

With the utmost liberality, the representatives of the people provided the means of covering the first expenses of the war; the militia was organised and

everywhere displayed incredible zeal for the defense of the country. Before the commencement of September, some battalions of young Canadians were placed upon the frontier echelloned from Yamaska to Saint-Régis.

Mgr. Plessis had scarcely arrived at Quebec, when he hastened to provide for the religious necessities of the militia ; who demanded immediately the presence of a priest among them. He nominated as Chaplain, M. Robitaille, Curé of Saint-Marc, and charged him with the care of the troops stationed at Saint-Johns, Isle aux Noix and the neighboring forts ; other priests were added as the line of defence was extended.

In the month of October, the Bishop addressed a circular to Messieurs les Curés, to thank them in the name of the Governor, for the assistance they had lent him, both in raising the Militia and maintaining subordination in the ranks of new recruits.

"Success" said he in that letter, "has fully responded to your efforts, to which we may attribute that ardor, which each day developes itself, more and more, to second the views of the Government, and to concur unanimously and efficaciously in the means of defending the Province. No spectacle can be more consoling than that of patriotism and piety, going hand in hand, in a way that the faithful, eager to purify themselves by the reception of the sacraments, are also the first to take themselves where the orders of their officers call them, and the most ready to fly to the combat."

Some days after, he addressed some warnings and exhortations to all his diocesans, and more particularly to those who watched the movements of the enemy near the frontier.

"Two things are necessary to you Militia men, charged upon the frontier with our dearest interests ; and you, commanders and officers of these estimable corps ! The first is, not to put your confidence in your own strength, as the unfaithful world do : *hi in curribus et hi in equis*. The brilliant success which we expect from your military ardor, reposes essentially upon the blessing that God will deign to grant to your

arms: *nos autem in nomine domini nostri invocabimus*. The second is, to shun the vices, which in rendering you unworthy of the protection of heaven, may draw upon your country vexation and humiliating reverses.....

“ And you! dearly beloved brethren, who, far from the field of battle, take nevertheless such a lively part in the fate of our warriors, and show yourselves so impatient of being called to share their work. You! pious wives, who with an emotion mixed with confidence, expect the departure of your husbands as you consented to that of your children; you! priests, whose ardent zeal for the public cause was communicated so efficaciously to your flocks, by administering the word, or where charity has conducted you to the field, to encourage your young parishioners; what remains for you to do? if not to raise your hands towards heaven, like Moses, when the army of Israël came to blows with the Amelekites.”*

The circular letters and the *mandements* of the Bishop produced marvellous effects upon his diocesans; while they again showed by their conduct, that they had been calumniated, when it had been tried to put in doubt their loyalty; wherever they were sent, they proved that the catholic religion had taught them to remain faithful to their flag, and to defend bravely the soil of their country.

An attempt of the American troops to penetrate into the district of Montreal, during the autumn of 1813, furnished to Canadians the occasion of displaying a courage worthy the renown of their fathers. Three hundred militiamen accompanied by a small troop of Indians, and conducted by the brave de Salaberry, arrested on the banks of the River Chateaugay more than four thousand Americans, forming the army of General Hampton and forced them to a precipitate retreat. That glorious combat, delivered on the 26th October, 1813, served to disconcert the plans of the enemy, and drew the colony out of an

* Mandement for public prayers 29th October, 1812.

imminent danger. At the same moment, an army more numerous threatened Montreal on the other side ; ten thousand men commanded by General Wilkinson, left Sacket's-Harbour, and descended the St. Lawrence in the hope of uniting with the army of Hampton.

On the rumor of that new danger, the Bishop hastened to address some paternal advice to those of his children who were upon the frontiers.

"Warriors,!" said he in his *Mandement* of the 11th November, "it is to you that belongs the task of opposing yourselves like a wall to the approach of the enemy, and to disconcert their measures. They will cease to be formidable when the God of battles fights on your side ; under his holy protection, march to combat as to victory ; sustain that reputation for obedience, for discipline, for valour, and for intrepidity, by which you deserved your first success. Your confidence will not be vain, if in exposing your lives, for the defence of your country and your hearths, you take care before all things to make your peace with God."

By a remarkable coincidence, the same day that this address was published in Quebec, the English troops gained a signal victory over the army of Wilkinson, at "Chrysler's Farm"; and in that affair, a corps of Canadian Voltigeurs under the orders of Major Herriot, especially distinguished itself by the side of the English soldiers.

The war continued a great part of the following year, and whenever the occasion presented itself, the entire Canadian population, encouraged by their chief pastor gave repeated proofs of its devotion to the country.

Repulsed in many attempts on the frontiers of Canada, and left in a struggle where they had nothing to gain, our neighbors of the United States began to reflect upon the expediency of an accommodation with England.

Peace was signed at Ghent in the month of December, 1814 ; it was ratified in the first place by the

Prince Regent on the part of Great Britain, on the twenty-ninth of the same month : and by the President of the United States in the month of February, 1815.

Sir George Prevost had not neglected the occasion of recognizing the services of the Militia. He informed the Colonial Secretary, particularly, of the zeal shewn by Mgr. Plessis and all his clergy, for the defence of Canada ; he represented also the salutary influence that the chief of the catholic church had exercised in those trying times over all his diocesans. A letter from Lord Bathurst to General Prevost in 1813, evidences that times were changed since the days when some of the government officers could threaten to drag the bishop of Quebec before the courts of justice, for having taken the title which belonged to him.

" I have to inform you," wrote Lord Bathurst, " that his Royal Highness the Prince Regent in the name of his Majesty, desires that hereafter the allowance of the Catholic Bishop of Quebec, be one thousand pounds per annum, as a testimony rendered to the loyalty and good conduct of the gentleman who now occupies that place, as well as of the other members of the Catholic Clergy of the Province."

Two months after, the same minister replied to the Anglican Bishop, who complained that the government recognized two titulars of the same diocese. " Whatever opinions may be entertained with respect to the adoption of measures for restraining the Catholic Church in the Province, or reducing its lately acquired superiority, I am sure you will feel with me that the moment at which His Majesty's Canadian subjects are making the most meritorious exertions in defence of the Province, against the enemy, is not the most auspicious for bringing forward any changes which they might, however erroneously, consider as trenching upon the privileges of their church."*

About the same period the clerk of the Executive Council, Mr. Ryland, was forced to give to Mgr.

* Letter 27th December, 1813.

Plessis the title of Catholic Bishop of Quebec, in a public document that he addressed to him, but he did it with a very bad grace. "Monsieur Plessis," he wrote to the Secretary of Sir George Prevost, "expresses the desire that I would give him the title of Roman Catholic Bishop of Quebec. Not thinking myself at liberty to adopt a change contrary to the practice, recommended in the instructions of His Majesty, I shall submit the question to the Governor, and allow myself to be guided by his decision."

In the name of General Prevost, Mr. Brenton replied briefly, that since Lord Bathurst himself recognized M. Plessis as Roman Catholic Bishop of Quebec, there existed no reason, which could hinder Mr. Ryland from doing as much.

Thus, the members of the cabal saw their insulting pretensions repelled by the Governor and by the ministry. That they had assured themselves, however, of a victory, may be seen by the following extract from a project for letters patent, which had been drawn by one of them during the administration of General Craig.

"By these presents we constitute and nominate N., our Ecclesiastical Superintendent for the affairs of our church of Rome, in our Province of Lower Canada.

"And we authorize the said N., and his successors in the said charge.... to exercise.... spiritual and ecclesiastical jurisdiction in our said province, according to law.... and we have given and accorded to our said Ecclesiastical Superintendent for the affairs of the Church of Rome, full power and entire authority to confer the order of Deacon and Priest, to institute by himself, or his delegate, the priests and deacons that we shall present and nominate to benefices in the province, with charge of souls....."

Thus we see, the project of placing the Ecclesiastical authority into the hands of the leaders of the Executive Council was completely organized, and wanted nothing but the approbation of the Sovereign.

By his prudence, moderation and firmness, Mgr. Plessis had completely baffled the machinations of

the anti-catholic party ; without allowing himself to be drawn into the political struggle, he held firmly to his post on religious ground ; one after the other, he had repulsed the attacks of the enemies of his church, and not only had he taken publicly his title of Bishop of Quebec, but had won for it, the recognition of the colonial and metropolitan authorities.

There remained however, to obtain some concessions from the Imperial Government, to assure the Catholic hierarchy that entire liberty of action in its own affairs, to which it had a right in the province. There were still some obstacles in the way of ameliorations ; and it needed all the Bishop's courage and perseverance, as well as the special protection of heaven, to maintain his church in that favorable position, that he had by the grace of God, succeeded in placing it. Though humiliated under General Prevost, the league of officials were neither destroyed nor dispersed ; they possessed agents, credit and protectors ; and were the self same party upon whose representations that Governor was recalled, who by his prudence, had preserved Canada to England, but who had been guilty of the crime of rendering justice to the old inhabitants of the country.

At the prorogation of the House of Assembly, on the 25th March, 1815, Sir George Prevost informed them that he had been recalled, in order to repel in Great Britain accusations which attacked his Military reputation. Though out of health, he left for England on the 3rd of April, making his way home by Saint John's, New Brunswick. The most flattering addresses were presented to him before his departure ; above all on the part of the French Canadians, grateful for his impartiality in their respect. He was sincerely regretted by the Bishop of Quebec, who knew his kindly disposition for the religious institutions of Canada.

" Our good Sir George has gone," he wrote shortly after to the Grand Vicar McDonell, " and with him have disappeared part of your hopes and mine for the advancement of letters, and of the catholic religion in our country."

Sir Gordon Drummond, who had been charged with the temporary administration of affairs, till a successor should be named to Sir George Prevost, had neither time nor inclination to occupy himself with the affairs of the catholic church.

The conclusion of peace permitted the Bishop to resume his visits to the missions enclosed in the provinces of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Leaving at the end of May 1815, he travelled round the Coast of Cape Breton, where he visited the ruins of Louisbourg, occupied then by the families of some poor fishermen; on the Coast of Nova Scotia, he stopped at many villages, which had been established for a few years by some Acadians returned from exile to inhabit a corner of their old country. At Halifax he was received with honor by the english authorities, and made acquaintance with Sir John Coape Sherbrooke, then Lieut Governor of the Province.

After having visited the most important missions of Old Acadia, and ascended the river St. John up to the Indian Village of St. Anne, he returned to Canada, passing through Boston, New-York and Albany. It was in the first of these cities that he met Mgr. de Cheverus, who was Bishop of Boston, and afterwards became Archbishop of Bordeaux and Cardinal; there also, he made acquaintance with the Venerable Grand Vicar M. Matignon, who wished to accompany the Bishop of Quebec to his Episcopal City.

Mgr. Plessis had now travelled through all parts of his vast diocese, with the exception of Upper Canada, which he undertook to visit in 1816; it was a journey of great difficulty. It had as yet few villages, and these separated from each other by interminable forests; here and there, were some groups of catholics; the most considerable being found at Saint Raphaël of Glengarry, at Kingston, and at Sandwich. The Prelate stopped many days at Kingston,* from

* In 1816, Kingston contained seventy-five catholic families, of which fifty-five were Canadian, and twenty Scotch and Irish. Sandwich had a catholic population of fifteen hundred souls. The two establishments of Malden and of La Rivière-à-la-Tranche, contained about four hundred and fifty souls.

there he went to Sandwich and Saint Peter of La Rivière-à-la-Tranche, both establishments were at that period, on the confines of civilization. Beyond commenced the great solitudes of the West, known under the name of the Upper Country; and where a great number of Canadians traded for the Hudson's Bay Company, and that of the North-West. With a view of supplying the spiritual necessities of these poor catholics, destitute for many a day of all religious instruction, and at the same time with the hope of procuring the conversion of the unfaithful, the Bishop of Quebec undertook the foundation of a permanent mission in the centre of the Indian Country of the North-West.

In short this year upon the demand of Lord Selkirk, who was occupied in forming a colony upon the Red River, near Lake Winnipeg, M. Tabeau, curé of Boucherville, had been sent to Fort William, situated at the western extremity of Lake Superior, there he was to meet the voyageurs of the north,* and obtain from them information upon the best means of establishing two missionaries at the Red River, in the midst of the families who were beginning to assemble there.

The year 1816 was marked by a certain degree of political discontent, caused by the apparent success of the party opposed to Sir George Prevost, and by the efforts of the leaders of the bureaucracy, to regain the ground that they had lost. A vague anxiety touching their projects seized the minds of the people, and even of a part of the clergy. Sir John Coape Sherbrooke, now in charge of the government of Canada, had received from Lord Bathurst instructions to conciliate the catholics. "The system," wrote Lord Bathurst, "adopted by the British legislation, precludes all possibility of supporting the protestants

* The men engaged by the North-West and Hudson's Bay Companies, whether for conducting their canoes, or for trading with the indians, were called "voyageurs." The voyageurs who stopped at Fort William bore the nickname of *mangeurs de lard* (bacon eaters). The true *voyageurs* of the North were those who remained beyond that post, and who never came down to Montreal till after a sojourn of many years in the indian country.

against the roman catholics in the province of Lower Canada.... There will be no indisposition here to attend to the roman catholics' interests and wishes, even though this should be unfavorable to the protestants, if you can come to a right understanding with that church."

To obtain this result, the new Governor proposed to call the Catholic Bishop to the Legislative Council, and to favor the institution of Apostolic Vicars in Upper Canada, Nova Scotia, and the Island of Prince Edward. These two propositions were submitted in England to the Attorney General, who approved of them.* After having taken the opinion of his friends, and weighed maturely the advantages that religion might gain from his presence in the Legislative Council, Mgr. Plessis decided to accept the favor that the British Minister wished to accord to the Catholics of Canada, in the person of their Bishop, and by a *mandamus* of the 30th April, 1817, he was nominated Legislative Councillor. In that instrument he was officially recognized by the Prince Regent, as Roman Catholic Bishop of Quebec.

Acquainted beforehand with the resolution of the Imperial Government, M. Sewell, Chief Justice of Lower Canada, protested against that measure, and declared that it tended to the recognition of the authority of the Pope within the domains of the British Empire; and proposed that at least some expedient should be adopted to save appearances. But as the nomination had been made after mature deliberation, Lord Bathurst not only refused to take a backward step, but further, the government consented to recognize the coadjutor—*cum futura successione*—whenever he would be presented to the Governor.

During the rest of his life the Bishop of Quebec sat regularly in the Legislative Council, in order to protect the interests of religion and the country. Though ranked with the minority in the chamber, the princi-

* Report of Sir C. Robinion, 1st March, 1818.

pal members of which, belonged to the Anglican religion, and allowed themselves to be guided by Dr. Mountain in Ecclesiastical matters, Mgr. Plessis never failed to vindicate with firmness the rights of Canadian Catholics, when the voice of the enemy was raised to attack their institutions or their rights.

In 1821, he pronounced strongly against a decision of his colleagues, in virtue of which, the popular branch of the legislature found itself deprived of a part of its privileges in the vote of the civil list ; and in 1824, he resisted with the same courage, some encroachments proposed by the ultra-anglican party, and succeeded in carrying the rejection of some propositions offensive to the Catholics ; his victory was complete, and the English Bishop left the house protesting the lack of devotion displayed by the Councilors to the religion of their august Sovereign.

VIII

Rules of life — Daily occupations — Correspondence — Portrait — Relations with his Clergy — Friends — His tendency to mirthfulness.

After having followed the worthy Bishop of Quebec through the long and painful struggle which he had to sustain during more than ten years, for the defence of his See, and the liberty of the Catholic worship ; we propose now, to enter into some of the details of his intimate life, and his relations with different portions of his fold.

As he had predicted when raised to the See of Quebec, his life, during his Episcopate, was an uninterrupted course of labor and sacrifice. His anxiety and anguish, may be imagined at those periods when he saw his church assailed, by the unflagging efforts of those public officers, who assumed to themselves the arbitration of the destinies of Canada ; and who from the height of their bureaus, looked down with such an eye of scorn upon the Catholic religion. He knew these men well ; he might have unveiled their manoeuvres to his people, who were well disposed to sus-

tain their first pastor; but these revelations would have given birth to deep and settled hatreds. Authority already overstrained by Governor Craig, would have sunk into complete impotence, the offers of the American Republic might have become sufficiently tempting to have led astray some unquiet minds, and have shaken their fidelity. The fear then, of exposing any part of his flock to these dangerous consequences, imposed upon him the duty of silent and patient suffering.

On the other hand, what reproaches had he not to endure on the part of ardent patriots, who not comprehending his motives, accused him of timidity, of obsequiousness, and of indifference, to the good or bad fortune of his fellow countrymen. But in order that he might not compromise the future of his flock, he resigned himself to these painful experiences.

If during many years his career appeared less harassed with difficulties, God had still reserved for his closing years some bitter contrarieties; the more painful to his soul, that they were raised by brothers, who had fought side by side with him, the enemies who assailed without. To these great sources of grief we may add also numerous other miseries, which would each day beset the life of a man, charged with the spiritual government of an immense territory, and accountable for his time and talents to the least, as well as to the greatest of his diocesans; these trials enable us to understand how he had reason to expect, as he himself expressed it, to be purified by a ministry full of crosses and opposition.

Compared with the sufferings of his soul, his bodily pains seemed very light. His busy round of daily occupations, far from being dreaded by him, were welcomed as wholesome distractions, and it would always embarrass him if they were less than ordinary. Regular and methodical in all his habits, he took the best plans for expediting business as it presented itself, and never allowed matters to accumulate.

After his elevation to the episcopacy, he followed as near as possible the regulations he had adopted

when he was curé of Quebec ; his day was prolonged from half-past four in the morning, till half-past eleven in the evening ; his time was laid out carefully and managed with the strictest economy.

At half-past six he had made his orison, said a part of the breviary of the day, and was found ready to begin mass. It was always after a long preparation and with a profound respect that he celebrated the holy sacrifice, during which he observed scrupulously the ceremonies ordained by the church.

In the midst of his multiplied occupations, and profound studies of theology, he found time to learn the rubric so well, that it was rarely necessary to him to have recourse to a manual for recalling those complicated details, which often put the best memories at default ; and he was equally versed in ceremonies which are prescribed to officers employed in the choir. Far from regarding these rites as idle observances, he remarked, that since God himself had not deemed it unworthy of his majesty, to regulate the ceremonial to be followed in the sacrifices of the ancient law, the minister of the catholic worship should singularly respect the ceremonies prescribed by the church, in the celebration of the great sacrifice of the new law. Thus he watched attentively to see that the clerics of his cathedral observed them with exactitude, and he repeated to them the maxim which he had adopted himself: *Omnia secundum ordinem fiant.*

At-half past seven in the morning, he entered his office, which he did not leave except for his meals, the recitation of his breviary and the exercises of piety. Supper was followed by an hour's recreation, during which he talked familiarly with the directors of the seminary, and the priests attached to the service of the Cathedral. He took an active part in the conversation, and rendered it both useful and agreeable by the attic salt of his mind, by the charm of his narrations, and by the extent of his acquirements. Few men related so happily ; he had the talent of seizing a fact on the wing, often little

interesting in itself; fashioning it in his own way, and presenting the most salient points in a new and interesting form. Sometimes he turned over by some piquant expression, whatever there was obsolete, ridiculous or absurd in a word, or in a situation. The matter of his narratives appeared inexhaustible : the fruits of his studies, his readings, his meditations, the souvenirs of his youth, his relation with the old bishops, the collected traditions of the last days of the french domination, his travel in Canada and the neighboring provinces, the grotesque scenes which had passed under his eyes in the assemblies of church-wardens and notables, the chronicles of the old parishes, the marvels of London of Paris and of Rome : such was the extended field which he knew how to unroll before his auditors in a way to interest and instruct them.

His daily occupations, although varied, all tended to the same principal end : the glory of God first, then the love of one's neighbor. Like St. Paul he could say that his solicitude extended over all the churches, for from his cabinet he directed the whole of the religious affairs of his vast diocese. Alone, he made everything move : communities, seminaries, colleges, missions, parishes. In difficult circumstances, the curés addressed themselves directly to him to receive his advice, and they were sure of obtaining with the least possible delay, a reply from their Bishop's own hand ; for though he had a secretary and under secretary, he generally employed them only in registering important letters, or in the ordinary transactions of the bureau.

His correspondence was immense and embraced all sorts of business, from that which he transacted with the Court of Rome, and the Colonial Minister, to the directions which he addressed to the steward on the economy of the College of Nicolet, or to the paternal advice which he gave to the youngest of his priests. The numerous and voluminous register of his letters preserved in the archives of the Archbishopric of Quebec, contain but a part of his correspondence

during his long episcopate. He smoothed down the difficulties of his clergy, directed them in the conduct of their parishes, gave them advice for themselves and for their flocks. To the Cardinal prefect of the Propaganda, he made regular reports, rendering a faithful account of the state of religion in his diocese ; he wrote frequently to Governors of Canada, to the civil chiefs of the Provinces enclosed in his diocese, and to the Bishops of England, Ireland and the United States.

His letters, like his discourses, were plain, clear and concise in style ; containing nothing useless, denoting in the writer a profound knowledge of ecclesiastical matters, the most varied acquirements, and a superior intelligence always served at will by a strong and happy memory ; and according to one of his friends "a wit which was all his own and which shone in his familiar conversations."

From his Episcopal City, he watched over all parts of his immense diocese, maintaining among them the Ecclesiastical discipline, and making them observe exactly, the Holy Canons ; to that end, he obliged his Grand Vicars, placed in important centres to make him frequent reports upon the parishes of the division placed under their care. But more than with any other he corresponded with M. Roux, Superior of the Seminary of Montreal, for he looked upon him, as his first and principal Grand Vicar ; he consulted him, confided to him all his plans, and shared with him the joys and afflictions of his Church.

The chapter of the Cathedral had been gradually extinguished after the conquest, and it had not been possible to renew it, in consequence of the limited number of priests, and the extinction of the prebends. Though deprived of this help, Mgr. Plessis never omitted to celebrate with splendor the great festivals of the year, with the assistance of the few directors, clerics and pupils of the Seminary, who still remained at his disposal. On these solemn occasions, the imposing figure of the prelate was remarkable, in the midst of the ministers, who surrounded the altar

during the celebration of the holy mysteries. Though below the middle height, his broad shoulders, his robust and vigorous frame, the gravity of his walk, the dignity of his manner, seemed to elevate him over all his assistants and to point him out as one destined to lead and to direct.

“Such he appeared on the day of his consecration,” observed one of the orators who pronounced his *éloge* “such you have seen him many times, and as often at that sight, you have been seized with a religious admiration. Did we not fix our looks with complaisance upon the person of that august prelate in the pompous festivals? the splendour of which he loved so well to augment by his august presence, and when the majesty of his person imprinted so lively on all hearts that holy veneration for the sacred ministry, and that high idea of religion with which he was himself penetrated?”

But it was particularly in the grand reunions of the Clergy, held on the celebration of the “*fête du sacerdoce*,” that the noble face of the prelate was seen to the best advantage. His piercing eyes seemed then to sound the hearts of those upon whom he allowed them to fall; his powerful head, remarkable for a broad and elevated forehead, became the centre of attraction, and dominated over the whole assembly, either when from the height of the sanctuary of the Cathedral, and surrounded by a triple circle of his priests, he addressed them his yearly latin allocution; or when receiving between his hands the renewal of the vows of each of them; from the veteran priest bent under the weight of years and work, to the young levite hardly entered upon his ecclesiastical career.

Knowing that upon the piety and knowledge of the clergy, depend ordinarily the spiritual advancement of the faithful, Mgr. Plessis frequently inculcated upon his priests the importance of study, meditation and retirement. In his letters, his conversations, and his public discourses, he suggested to them the means of maintaining themselves in the practice of virtues

proper to their condition, and exhorted them to neglect none of them.

He was himself a living lesson to them ; for he had a good right to be regarded as the model of his clergy. His solid piety, his irreproachable manners, his observance of the discipline of the church, his extreme regularity, made him in every respect an accomplished ecclesiastic. Such an example could scarcely fail to have a great influence over the conduct of his priests who tried to imitate the edifying life of their Bishop.

Most of them loved him as children love their father, and would have been grieved to have vexed him by any act or deed.

"If I had offended that man," said one day M. Painchaud, the founder of the College of St. Anne, "I would consent to draw myself upon my knees from my Presbytery to Quebec, to ask him pardon of my fault."*

We may truly say that the maxims and examples of the great bishop, have left upon the character of the Canadian Clergy an indelible impression, and have also extended their influence over all the faithful committed to their care.

On his own part he also was attached to his priests ; he liked to see and converse with them. His door was always open to them, and he was always glad to see them at his table, in his College at St. Roch ; for which purpose, he made it a practice to pass one day of the week there. In their sickness, he constantly visited them, to see that they had every care and assistance they needed,

That man, to all appearances so cold and impassible in the midst of life's difficulties, possessed a sensitive heart. Many a time tears were seen coursing down his cheeks, when he assisted at the sepulture of one of his old co-operators in the great vineyard of the father of the family. During his most painful struggles, when his features betrayed his moral sufferings,

* M. Charles François Painchaud was one of the most amiable and the most brilliant men of the Canadian Clergy.

the friendly voice of some of those priests particularly attached to him, was sufficient to restore him to such a state of serenity, as would remove from his troubled brows, all traces of the storm. These intimate friends were not numerous ; but we may judge of their worth, when we cite the names of De Guise, Girouard, Desjardins, Turgeon, Perras, Maguire and Raimbault.

When the worthy prelate could for some days, forget the anxieties and cares attached to the Episcopate, his gravity gave place to a frank and almost infantine gaiety.

His annual visits to the College of Nicolet, were the occasions that seemed to relieve him for a few days of the weight of his dignity. He would then resume the habits of his early years, in order to approach the young people with familiarity ; he would pass through the ranks of the students with a smile on his lips, and knowing them all by name, would address to each words full of benevolence and amiability ; he questioned them kindly, and if he drew a witty reply from any one, he was the first to laugh heartily. Some times he presided over their recreations, and suggested to them the songs or games, that he recalled from the amusements of his early years ; like a father restored to the bosom of his family after a long separation, and enjoying the happiness of his well beloved children.

There was in the depth of his soul a strong fund of gaiety, ordinarily suppressed by the exigencies of his position, but often ready to run over in spite of all his efforts to stifle it.

His episcopal visits often furnished the occasions, when in spite of himself, he would lose that seriousness necessary for the exercise of his functions ; this propensity humiliated him very much, but he could not master it, when some grotesque object or ridiculous circumstance struck his sight suddenly.

He acknowledged that frequently he had only been able to contain himself by incredible efforts. On his visitation to one of the parishes recently established north of Montreal, he was received with Military honors. After his solemn entrance into the church, he

had turned to give from the altar, his customary blessing to the crowd, when he suddenly stopped for some moments quite unable to utter a word; at last he succeeded in making himself heard, but his voice was broken, and seemed at each instant ready to fail him. "Is Monseigneur sick?" asked one of the priests of the mission of M. Turgeon, then Secretary—"No," replied he, "but he has seen something to provoke his laughter." The prelate afterwards explained the enigma; in the midst of the people, piously kneeling, he perceived about fifty young men affecting a Military tenue, and shouldering fire-arms of all sorts and sizes. These amateur Militia men had heard, that a soldier under arms should neither kneel nor uncover in the church; some had on their heads straw hats, with long cock's feathers stuck in them; others wore blue caps with a large white border, and surmounted with an enormous pompon of wool. The attitude and accoutrements of these braves were so comical, that the Bishop on perceiving them, experienced the greatest difficulty in suppressing the laugh which every moment rose to his lips.

At this epoch also, the country churches contained many detestable paintings, some of which were veritable caricatures, more calculated to excite the gaiety than the piety of the faithful. Mgr. Plessis took much pains to exclude these crudities from the holy places, but after all his care, some would escape the general sentence, remaining as it were, charged with the duty of avenging their exiled companions.

On the opening day of one of his visits to the parish of Saint François de Neuville, the prelate was addressing from the pulpit his opening discourse to a numerous and attentive auditory, wrapt in the words of their first pastor. In the midst of one of the most serious passages of his sermon, he turned towards the choir, where unhappily his eyes fell upon a spacious canvas, bedaubed with the most lively colors; he withdrew them instantly, for he recognized a snare to his gravity; spite of all his efforts, the unhappy painting seemed to possess the power of fascination, com-

pletely overcame him, and arrested him in his discourse ; he plunged with a devouring look to the very depths of the impurpled sky before him. What a scene ! A mass of stars, the sun and half moon, were depicted upon the grey wings of an angel. This was intended to represent Saint Michel, dressed in a red coat, blue pantaloons and large riding boots. The archangel appeared crossing the skies and winging his way towards the earth, like a hero of romance ; head on high and flaming sword in the air, ready to thrust it up to the handle. With his thick and heavy heel, he was about to crush the robust nose of Lucifer, who on his part, was preparing to receive the blow upon his horns, and was replying to the threats of his enemy with frightful grimaces.

This scene produced its full effect upon the preacher, thousands of strange and grotesque ideas crossed his imagination ; his breast swelled, his nostrils dilated, and an irrepressible desire to laugh stifled his speech. He sat down, rose again, coughed ; vain were his efforts, nothing could chase from his mind that inimitable grimace of Satan. In despair he hurried through his peroration, gained the sacristy, and falling into a chair relieved himself by a prolonged and vigorous fit of laughter.*

We can well understand how, after playing him such an ugly turn, that picture, with its incongruities,

* So long as ministers are endowed like other men with a sense of the ridiculous and the faculty of laughter, occasions the most *mal-à-propos* will arise, when it would be utterly impossible to suppress the exercise of them. I am informed by a friend that a few months ago, he read in an English paper, a story to the following effect :—A clergyman having been interrupted in his discourse, and provoked to laughter by the antics of some urchin in the congregation, expressed his deep regret from the pulpit ; but at the same time begged that no person would censure him until he had first called upon him in the vestry for an explanation. He was duly waited upon by many of his parishioners at the close of the service, when he stated, that while preaching, his attention had been attracted towards a man with a large stock of flaming red hair : behind this man was a small boy, who was amusing himself by thrusting his forefinger among the man's fiery locks, and then withdrawing it ; turning it over and over, and hammering it upon the edge of the pew with his fist, as though he had drawn a heated iron from the forge. Not one of his interlocutors could refrain from laughing at this relation, and acquitted their pastor of all intentional irreverence.—(*Translator's Note.*)

was consigned, henceforth, to the loft of the church, never to re-appear in the light of day. "And it well deserved it" added the Bishop, in relating this anecdote, "it made me pass through one of the roughest experiences of my life, for I feared I should have been compelled every moment to burst into open laughter in the pulpit.

IX

Pupils of the Great Seminary—Young priests—General respect for the Bishop of Quebec—Episcopal visits—College of Saint Hyacinth—Church and college of the suburb of Saint Roch.

Convinced that it was better to have good priests than many of them, Mgr. Plessis exercised the utmost vigilance in the choice of young men for the priesthood; he watched over the pupils of the Great Seminary; interrogated them himself, to discover their talents and capacity; and enquired frequently into their character and conduct. On Sundays he gave them a conference, either upon the holy scriptures, or upon the ritual, or on the administration of parishes. This sort of instruction he rendered so interesting, that it was looked forward to with pleasure by all, except sometimes by those, whose conscience was charged with some fault, committed in the ceremonies, or the chants during the offices of the day, or who during the week had broken some regulation, particularly that relating to silence.

On the head of some of the guilty ones, the storm burst in a terrible way; while only a grave and solemn admonition fell upon the head of others. To remain patiently on the stool of repentance, bearing all in perfect silence was the only remedy. Unhappy he who tried to shelter himself under vain excuses. Frequently the reprimand which the young cleric thus received publicly was a decisive trial; its sole object was to find the weak point in the character of the aspirant. When he showed himself impatient, or froward, but above all, if he replied unnecessarily to the reproaches that were addressed to him, his fate

was decided ; he was told that " a priest like a soldier should receive the orders and reprimands of his superiors, without murmuring before his confreres."

When the sitting rose, he who had endured patiently the reprimand, might in private plead his cause before the Bishop, who far from being offended, was always then disposed to receive explanations, and to administer words of encouragement and consolation.

On leaving the Grand Seminary the young priest was a particular object of solicitude to Mgr. Plessis ; the letters of the venerable prelate addressed to the new vicars or to the missionaries still devoid of experience, occupy a large place in his correspondence. He warned them against the dangers of their position, traced out for them a rule of life, and gave them salutary counsels to guide them in the exercise of the holy ministry.

It was not only in the bosom of his clergy that the Bishop of Quebec enjoyed an esteem and veneration justly merited ; all classes of society respected him profoundly. Our separated brethren honored him for his virtues, and his talents, universally recognized ; the chiefs of the party opposed to the catholic cause, could not withhold their admiration for his high intelligence, his moderation and perseverance ; with the governors he knew how to maintain relations of good will and civility, even when resisting their demands ; Sir George Prevost, and Sir John Sherbrooke in particular, gave him their friendship. As to his diocesans all knew him, venerated him, and were attached to him. The catholic members of both branches of the Legislature, had recourse to his wisdom and his prudence, whenever some great interest of the province was in question. Separated from him sometimes on secondary measures, they claimed his counsels and support on all important occasions ; for they knew him to be entirely devoted to his country, and they appreciated the value of his name before the Canadian population.

The citizens of Quebec, in the midst of whom he had passed the greatest part of his life, and of whom

he had been the curé many years, were completely devoted to him, and many of them held their purses as open to him as their hearts ; some of the principal merchants of the city were always ready to respond to his appeals. His income was always forstalled, for churches, missions, or for the unfortunate, but if he had some sudden and pressing demand in favor of a work of charity, he had no necessity to recur to a loan, it was sufficient to send to one of those honest bourgeois a short hint, and the required sum made its appearance immediately.

Among the people of the suburbs and of the country, he stood for grandeur and authority personified. A single word on his part had more weight with the masses than the most eloquent speeches of the popular orator ; they had full confidence in him, because he was the servant of God and the father of the people.

The year when Mgr. Plessis was about to visit a parish, was regarded as a year of benediction. With what eagerness his arrival was expected by the population assembled around the church ! Carriages and horsemen were ready to receive him on the limits of the parish ; pressing eagerly around him, or following his carriage. With bells chiming, and guns firing, the escort would debouch upon the public place. The silent crowd would precipitate itself on its knees before the chief pastor, who, with head uncovered, would advance slowly through their midst, calling down the blessings of heaven upon his children, who pressed to see and hear him.

These visits were renewed every year, and occupied him ordinarily two or three months. As secretary to Bishops Briand and Hubert, he had already gone over the whole diocese ; but after having been raised to the Episcopate, he visited every parish in Lower Canada, three several times. He had thus acquired most accurate details on the topography of the country ; and thanks to his prodigious memory, he knew nearly all the Canadian families. At the first glance he could call by their names, not only the

most of the citizens of Quebec, but even the principal inhabitants of each parish of the country.

During the course of his visits, he was almost constantly occupied, either with consoling and encouraging the pastors, or instructing and reprimanding the flock, and restoring the scattered sheep to the straight road. Often he undertook the task of looking up people, who had become estranged from their religious duties, through shame, negligence or obstinacy, and he rarely failed in these charitable expeditions. Skilful in disentangling the most complicated questions, and endowed with the most admirable patience, he often restored to order, the difficulties of parochial vestries, by the authority which he knew so well how to apply ; and by the dignity of his manner, he calmed the assemblies of church-wardens, when the spirit of discord seemed ready to overturn every thing ; sometimes by a witty and apropos observation, he would lower the tone of some village babbler, and restore his misapprehensions to reason.

Once or twice a day he would deliver the word of God, choosing careful subjects proper to the locality, and suiting his discourse to the capacity of his auditory, in such a way as to produce the most salutary effects upon their souls.

In the midst of all these details, so varied and so embarrassing, Mgr. Plessis spared the necessary time to correspond with his grand vicars and his curés ; to every corner of his diocese he extended his vigilance.

In spite of the number of French priests, who in consequence of the revolution, had been guided by providence towards Canada ; the Bishop of Quebec, while on his visitations, observed each year that the spiritual destitution of his flock increased gradually ; the colleges then in existence could not furnish sufficient priests for the necessities of a population, which augmented with such rapidity as to overflow the bounds of the old parishes and create a necessity for new ones.

It was with the view of providing for those growing necessities, that he established the college of Nicolet. A few years after he was happy to find a co-operator in the work of instruction in one of his oldest and best friends, M. Antoine Girouard, curé of St. Hyacinth, a man endowed with a noble heart, and remarkable for the solidity of his judgment. Zealous in the good cause, and animated by the purest patriotism, that good priest perceived the void which was taking place in the ranks of the clergy, and he wished to assist in filling it.

"He felt that the country wanted defenders, and that education alone could elevate his race, and draw it from that state of inferiority, in which some desired, perhaps for a long time yet to keep it."*

Mr. Girouard proposed his plan to the Bishop of Quebec, who warmly welcomed it. "Your projects," wrote the prelate to his friend, "are in such unity with my own, that I subscribe to them in advance, persuaded that God will be glorified by them. I could wish that all my curés thought like you and knew as well how to turn their reflections to the same advantage.... Your example may be useful to many. Yes, enlarge your scale; aim at an education more extended. My opinions will change much, if I am not found seconding you.... It will demand time and resources, but let us not be discouraged. Two good tithes will be sufficient for the building; the boarders will produce something, and by furnishing with simplicity, where others have acted with such folly, you will be in a state to help and to give...."†

The work of the curé of Saint Hyacinth was powerfully favored by the Bishop, who furnished to the new institution, professors and directors, drawn in part from his house at Nicolet, and partly from the College of Montreal. He drew up with his own hand, the regulations for the pupils, and in 1817 he added, for the advantage of the ecclesiastics employed as regents, a series of instructions proper to direct them in their

* Discourse pronounced by M. Raymond, Vicaire Général, 1861.

† Letter of the Bishop of Quebec, 22nd November, 1810.

studies, and to render them one day worthy of serving the church, by the exercise of the sacerdotal ministry.

While Mgr. Plessis was Curé of Quebec, his attention had been drawn to the spiritual wants of a portion of the city, inhabited nearly exclusively by Canadians. Situated in the valley watered by the river St. Charles, the suburb of St. Roch seemed even then, destined to take great dimensions. Thus like the founder, and the first inhabitants of Quebec, the prelate thought, that the city would one day occupy the plain which extends from the foot of the Côteau Saint Geneviève to the river St. Charles. It became important therefore to provide for the future necessities of that quarter. In 1811, M. John Mure, had given a spot of land, situated then in the middle of the fields far from any dwellings. The same year the foundations of a church were began, and by means of collections, but above all by the purse of the Bishop, it was nearly finished and about to be opened for worship, when towards the end of the year 1816, a violent fire reduced it to ashes, and left nothing standing but blackened and rent walls.

The prelate received the news of that accident with his usual sang froid, and while the fire yet continued its ravages, he took measures to rebuild the edifice and consoled himself with the thought, that he might avoid many grave defects of the first plan. In short the work was resumed as soon as the season permitted, and with such activity, that in the month of October 1818, the Bishop had the consolation of consecrating the church under the invocation of the blessed Virgin Mary. But though he had thus far succeeded, it was at the expense of enormous sacrifices on his part; for his resources were exhausted, and he remained charged with a debt of two thousand pounds.

His benevolent views carried him still further, he foresaw that the house of God would soon be surrounded with a numerous catholic population, for whom he had prepared the means of obtaining religious instruction; he wished also that the youth should find on the spot, instructors capable of form-

ing and enlightening their minds. In the year 1795, he had founded a school in the suburbs of St. Roch; and to this first mark of his benevolence, he believed it his duty to add a second benefit, in establishing a College where young people endowed with talents, and called to the ecclesiastical state, might at small cost enter upon a course of studies, which they could finish either at the Seminary of Quebec, or at the College of Nicolet.

In consequence of this resolution, in the month of October 1818, some classes were opened in the spacious house that served for a presbytery; some ecclesiastics, placed under the guidance of the clergy who served the church, were employed as regents, and soon the institution entered into full operation.

The Bishop himself had marked out the plan of the studies, which tended to abridge the ordinary course. At the end of three years the pupils were expected to know latin, english, mathematics: and to have acquired considerable acquaintance with geography and history. This plan had the advantage of terminating their studies in six years; it succeeded very well for studious pupils endowed with good talents; but for young persons of ordinary capacity, it had not the success which its author expected. Possessing himself a marvellous facility, he forgot that most men only arrived at knowledge by a long and painful labor. Still, during the ten or eleven years that the college was in operation, it furnished a good number of pupils, who finished their studies with success in other houses, and did honor to the little college that gave them their first lessons.

X

Project of dividing the diocese of Quebec.—Mr. Alexander MacDonell—Nova Scotia erected into an apostolical vicariate—Upper Canada and New Brunswick subjected to auxiliary Bishops—North-West Territory—Letter from Lord Selkirk—Departure of M.M. Provencher and Dumoulin for Red River—Establishment of a mission—Mgr. Plessis decides upon going to Europe—Motives of his voyage—Property of the Seminary of Montreal—M. Lartigue.

Ever since he had taken possession of the episcopal see of Quebec, Mgr. Plessis had, through the govern-

ment of the Mother-Country, obtained the recognition of a share of those rights of which the little oligarchy composing the Executive Council had tried to deprive the church of Canada. The English Ministry seemed disposed to suppress the narrow views of those who had undertaken to proscribe the free exercise of the catholic religion in that country. So that the position of the catholic church was better than it had ever been. There remained, however, some important ameliorations to introduce, for ensuring a more efficacious ecclesiastical administration. To obtain a result which he regarded as so necessary for the well being of his flock, Mgr. Plessis had reflected for a long time upon the necessity of dividing his immense diocese into several apostolical vicariates, and steps had already been taken to smooth the difficulties which he apprehended in the execution of that project. In 1816, Mr. Alexander MacDonell, his vicar general in Upper Canada, had gone to England to induce the Ministry to favor the measure proposed by the Bishop of Quebec. No one was so calculated to succeed in such a delicate mission, as that estimable ecclesiastic, who enjoyed great credit with the British Government.

In the month of July 1817, the holy father separated Nova Scotia from the diocese of Quebec, erecting that province into an apostolical vicariate; and confiding the new division to Mr. Edmond Burke, who was consecrated in 1818, at Quebec, under the title of Bishop of Sion. At the same epoch, Lord Castlereagh induced the Court of Rome to erect two other apostolical vicariates; the one formed of Upper Canada, the other of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and the Magdalens.

There were still some divisions judged necessary by Mgr. Plessis; he desired to place a Bishop in the district of Montreal, and another in the territory of the North-West.

Watered by the rivers which empty themselves into Hudson's Bay, the North-West Territory had been formerly visited by some Jesuits, who however, made

no stay there ; * so that the Gospel had not yet been announced in these immense regions ; the name of the true God was known only to some Canadian voyageurs, and half breeds, known in the Colony by the name of Bois-Brûlés (Burnt Wood).

But before placing a Bishop in these countries, it was thought necessary to send missionaries there, to prepare the way. M. Tabeau, Chaplain of the General Hospital of Quebec, was ordered in 1816 to Fort William upon Lake Superior, and afterwards to continue his way to Lake Winnipeg, circumstances permitting. He could not all at once fulfil the last part of his instructions, in consequence of the difficulties existing between the Hudson's Bay and North-West Companies.

In the month of May 1818, two missionaries left for the Red River. Messieurs Joseph Norbert Provencher and Sévère Nicolas Dumoulin, named to that painful mission, were accompanied by M. Guillaume Etienne Hedge, an Ecclesiastic, who was to perform the duties of Catechist. With the benevolent care that marked all his actions, Sir John Sherbrooke had forwarded a general letter of recommendation to all public functionaries and local authorities. Lord Selkirk also who resided at Montreal, testified much good will to the mission, which he had himself urgently solicited from the Bishop of Quebec, and towards which, he had contributed a great extent of land, in the centre of his Colony, upon the banks of the Red River.

In 1816, he wrote the Bishop the following letter, which deserves to be reproduced :

" I have been informed by Mr. MacDonell, the old Governor of Red River, that last autumn he begged you to send a missionary into that Country, to give spiritual assistance to a great number of Canadians, who are established there, and take a wandering life

* In June 1737, one of the sons of the celebrated discoverer Gauthier de la Vérandrye was massacred by the Sioux, on an Island of the Lake of the Woods ; with him were killed Father Auneau, a Jesuit, and twenty Canadian voyageurs.

after the fashion of the Indians, and who have contracted with Indian girls, connexions contrary to law. I am persuaded that a zealous and intelligent ecclesiastic would operate an infinite benefit among these people, who have almost entirely lost all religious sentiments. I shall be happy to cooperate all in my power in such a good work.....

"I have been lately informed that your Lordship has formed the project of sending next summer, two ecclesiastics to Lake Superior and to the Rainy Lake, about the time when the voyageurs employed by the North-West Company visit these posts.

"As these people have so much necessity for salutary advice, I am happy to learn that such a project has been proposed. However, if I am permitted to offer an opinion, I would observe that the permanent residence of a missionary at the Red River, would accomplish your pious design in a way the most efficacious; for from his ordinary residence, he could easily visit the trading posts upon the Rainy Lake, and Lake Superior, while the voyageurs are assembled there. On the other hand, a missionary sent from Canada, to visit these posts during the summer, could not meet the numerous bodies of wandering Canadians, who are not employed by either of the trading companies, and who, having renounced all idea of returning to their native parishes, have more particularly a necessity of religious aid....."

Through Lord Selkirk the Bishop of Quebec, received the first reliable news of the arrival of the two missionaries at their destination, in a letter written in French, and dated the 18th October 1818.

"During my late journey in Upper Canada," said he, "I had the pleasure of receiving letters from the the Red River, which have announced to me the happy arrival of Messieurs Provencher and Dumoulin. These letters, as well as the verbal report which I have received from M. Lorimier, on his arrival here, inform me that the inhabitants, and above all, the Canadian old *voyageurs*, with their half breed families, have shown the best disposition to profit by the

instruction of the missionaries, and that the Indians also, have testified that respect, which gives room to believe that they will be equally docile.....

"I have heard lately," he adds, "that there is a probability of Upper Canada being erected into a separate diocese. If this dismemberment should take place, I hope that the Red River will remain still in the diocese of Quebec; it would give me much pain, if this rising establishment did not remain under the jurisdiction of your Lordship, who has so happily commenced it. I remember that at Quebec last spring, your Lordship suggested, that so long as these countries remained so isolated, they should have a separate and independent establishment; but in waiting till the population had taken that increase, which would be necessary to support a separate establishment without aid; it appears to me that all these Indian countries should be attached to the diocese of Quebec, rather than to any other, seeing that the Catholics who are spread over them, speak only French, and that in consequence Upper Canada could not furnish suitable persons to the Ministry...."

M. Provencher, who had been named Vicar General, fixed his dwelling at la Fourche, upon the right bank of the Red River, a little distance from the mouth of the Assiniboine. M. Dumoulin ascended the following year, twenty-five leagues higher, and established his residence at Pembina, near the river of that name. The environs of these two localities were occupied by the families of a few Canadians, who had been employed in trading with the tribes of the west. Accustomed to the habits of the country, these veterans had married Indian women, and had begun to busy themselves with agriculture; hoping that the earth would furnish them the means of adding bread and vegetables to the meat which they procured by hunting the Buffalo on the prairies.

The young half breeds were intelligent, but had received no other religious lessons, than those which were given by their fathers; little instructed themselves in christian truths, after a sojourn of from

twenty-five to thirty years in these barbarous countries. So that in the bosom of that demi-savage population, a profound ignorance prevailed, and vice had taken deep root. Happily the arrival of the missionaries was ardently desired ; they had been often asked for, by the patriarchs of the colony, and the entire population received them with satisfaction. They soon gathered precious fruit ; drawing within the fold the scattered sheep, and sowing the seed of faith in the hearts of the unfaithful, who held relations with the Catholics. But consoling as were the spiritual dispensations of the two missionaries, they gave them at the cost of many personal sacrifices, and during the first years of their residence, a deprivation of many things, that they had till then regarded as of prime necessity.

During the Easter of 1819, which they passed together at La Fourche, they had nothing to eat but white fish, without salt, bread, vegetables or any seasoning.

God was pleased to bless the work of these apostolic men. Their little christian community increased rapidly ; half breed families arrived from the profounds of the west, and fixed their residence before the cabins of the black robes ; religion made its conquests, the morals of those children of the wilderness were ameliorated, and the nucleus of a Catholic Colony formed gradually upon the banks of the Red River.

In 1819, the Bishop of Quebec learned, that the foundation of that important mission of the west was an accomplished fact. Two Canadian Priests had succeeded in planting the cross at the entrance of the immense prairies, which extended from Lake Winnipeg, and the sources of the Mississippi, unto the Rocky Mountains. In the name of the most high they had taken possession of that vast territory, where hundreds of Nomade Tribes lived under the yoke of the demon. Other missionaries were sent to take part in the work of evangelization so happily begun. But it was necessary that the new-born church at the Red River,

should have a Chief, clothed with sufficient power, to organize, direct, and provide, for the spiritual necessities of the flock. Secondary pastors were required, and it became urgent to place that territory under the guidance of a resident Bishop.

That operation was intended to be co-ordinate with the general division of the diocese of Quebec, but Mgr. Plessis only hoped to obtain it after long negotiations in the Courts of Rome and London; for he had not yet been informed of the success which attended Mr. MacDonell's efforts, in favor of Upper Canada and New Brunswick. In these embarrassing circumstances, the principal members of the Catholic Clergy pressed the Bishop to go himself to England, in order to come with as little delay as possible, to some understanding with the Home Ministry, upon the request that he was about proposing to the sovereign pontiff. All were persuaded that the results would be happy, if he presented himself at Downing-street, where his name was known and respected.

Before leaving Quebec in the month of August 1818, Sir John C. Sherbrooke had strongly advised Mgr. Plessis to make this voyage; which he represented as being advantageous to Canada, to the Bishop of Quebec, and to the Catholic Clergy. So many solicitations, joined to the powerful motives suggested by the interests of religion, overcame the repugnance that the Bishop at first experienced, to undertake a voyage, not to be accomplished with the same ease that it is now a days. In an address issued after his return, he explained the various motives of his voyage to Europe, giving as the strongest the division of his Diocese.*

"Our illustrious predecessors," said he, "who engaged in this great work, met with insurmountable obstacles. They naturally looked to the district of Montreal as about to be, by its population, and by the importance of its principal city, the first part to be dismembered. Ever since the year 1783, the clergy

* Mandement 5 Dec., 1822.

and citizens of that city, had taken proceedings on that subject; the proofs of which are still to be found in our archives, but which unfortunately remained unfruitful. While the islands and shores of the Gulf of St. Lawrence were being peopled with catholics, Upper Canada added to its old population an accession of emigrants; to whom more immediate help was necessary, than we could give them ourselves. In the North-West a mission has been established, which gives great hopes, as much for the conversion of the infidels, as to the restoration to piety and good morals, of a great number of bad christians, dispersed over an immense surface. Thanks to our youth, and to a health long sustained, we have traversed more than five hundred leagues of territory from East to West, to wit, from the island of Cape Breton to the river Thames, in Upper Canada; and though these excursions have carried us farther than any of our predecessors, much more would be necessary to enable us to reach the extremity of a diocese, without bounds to the West and to the North.

“ This it was that engaged us in 1819, to solicit a division of the whole into five dioceses; of which the first would be composed of the three districts of Gaspé, of Quebec, and of Three Rivers; the second of the Islands and Provinces of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the third of the single district of Montreal, the fourth of the Province of Upper Canada, and the fifth of all the territory watered by the rivers which shed their waters into Hudson’s Bay and James’ Bay.”

This plan had been agreed to, and even partly suggested by the Court of Rome; and the question was, to get it approved of at London for civil purposes. In short it was absolutely necessary, that the new Bishops should be recognized by the civil authority, in order to enable them to act freely, in all that regarded the temporalities of their churches: the erection of new parishes, the division of old ones, the construction of churches, the acquisition of lands required for buildings, and a crowd of other affairs of that kind, in which it was often necessary to have

recourse to the Courts of Law, before referring them to the Episcopal authority. Now if these attributes were refused to him in the Courts of Justice, if the Bishop was not recognized by the law, the temporalities of the churches would fall step by step, but inevitably, into an inextricable confusion. Hence the importance placed by Mgr. Plessis upon the recognition by the British Government, of those Bishops to whom the Sovereign Pontiff should accord spiritual powers, and episcopal jurisdiction.

To this the principle object of the Bishop's voyage, were joined other motives of a secondary order. Thus he wished to obtain letters patent to establish a corporation for the little Seminary of Nicolet ; and he was anxious also to join his representations, to those of the gentlemen of St. Sulpice, in order to frustrate the projects of the high functionaries of the colony, who were always endeavoring to induce the government to sequester the seigniory of Montreal.

Some censitaires of the Seminary of St. Sulpice, had refused to acquit the claims due to the seigneurs, and there were members of the Executive Council, who judged the occasion favorable for renewing the pretensions of the Crown to the property of that institution. Mr. Ryland therefore addressed a letter on the 16th April, 1819, to Colonel Ready, secretary of the Duke of Richmond, in order to draw the attention of the Governor to the question.

" If you consider," wrote he, " the prodigious increase that will be made to the value of the St. Sulpician estates by the completion of the Lachine canal, you will feel as sensibly as I do, of how much consequence it is, that His Majesty's rights with regard to them should now be asserted and declared ; and I cannot doubt that the *protest* by opening the eyes of the public to the utter want of title on the part of the Seminary, will have the effect of compelling that body to throw itself upon the liberality of the Crown, and thus afford to government the means of a financial arrangement, that will eventually relieve it from



all further necessity of looking to the Assembly for the supplies required to pay the civil list."

Sir John Sherbrooke had been compelled by sickness to resign the government of the province, the Canadians saw his departure with grief. "The province and the clergy," wrote M. Roux, "express ardent wishes for his re-establishment. Religion in this country is under the greatest obligations to him, for of all the Governors he has treated it best, and done the most for it."*

This friend of the Canadians was replaced by the Duke of Richmond, who took the reins of government on the 28th July, 1818, and it was to that nobleman that Mr. Ryland now addressed all his efforts.

In the month of May, 1819, M. Roux laid before the Governor a memorial, in support of the rights of the Seminary of Montreal, over the property which it possessed in the province, at the date of the treaty of cession. This appeal to justice excited the indignation of some of the councillors of the Duke, and drew from Mr. Ryland the following observations, directed against the memorial of M. Roux :

"It is impossible," exclaimed he, "not to contrast the destitute, woebegone, supplicating refugee, with the bigoted and presumptuous ecclesiastic ; strong in the possession of estates of incalculable value, and of an influence the most dangerous and extensive ! M. Roux and his community have not been unobservant of the line of politics pursued by the two last successive Governors in Chief, with respect to the Roman Catholic establishments in this Province. While that order of things lasted, we saw a revenue of fifteen hundred louis attached to the title of Roman Bishop, without the smallest advantage accruing to the Crown ;..... and, what is of much greater consequence, they have seen the person holding this situation, raised to a seat in the Legislative Council, from which the King himself, has not the power to remove him. They are aware of the advan-

* Letter of M. Roux, 19th February, 1819.

tage they will derive from the presence of this personage in England, where he will possess the means of making a splendid appearance, and they flatter themselves with reason that his subtlety and talents and sanctimonious professions of loyalty.... cannot fail to secure the acquiescence of His Majesty's ministers in every measure that he may propose.

"These people have seen all English influence gradually excluded from the House of Assembly, where they are now sure that no Bill will pass which could tend to encourage a protestant population..... means must be found for introducing a protestant representation in the House of Assembly, either by a Union of the two provinces, or by a new division of the Lower Province, so as to afford representation to the townships."

Mr. Ryland and his friends were less buoyant, since they had lost all hope of being some day able to despoil the catholic church of its claims and its property. What fanaticism on the part of the Canadian Clergy ! to offer any resistance to their spoilers and to appeal for justice to the British Government ! What a shame for the Prevosts and the Sherbrookes to have consented to allow the old inhabitants of the Country, liberty of conscience, and the privilege of being treated like the other subjects of the Empire !

Accustomed to command in their Bureaus, impregnated with religious and national prejudices, the old Councillors of General Craig, treated as fanatics, and rebels, those who refused to bend the head to their intolerance and despotism. We must not then be surprised, if they regarded with a very evil eye the memorial of M. Roux. But the mass of the English population in the province displayed more liberality, and the Government of the mother Country, was evidently above that miserable spirit of chicane.

As however, it was necessary to counterbalance the influence, which it might be apprehended would be brought to bear before the Colonial Secretary, and which tended to despoil the Seminary of Montreal ; the Gentlemen of Saint Sulpice deputed M. Lartigue

to sustain their cause in the Bureau of Downing-Street. The legal acquirements of that eminent priest, peculiarly fitted him to fill that mission ; he accepted it willingly, and profited by the favorable occasion offered by the presence of Mgr. Plessis in London.



PART THIRD.

I

Arrival of Mgr. Plessis at Liverpool—He learns that he has been named Archbishop—Sir John Sherbrooke—London—Bishop Poynter—Three memorials presented to Lord Bathurst—Cirencester—Visit to Lord Bathurst—Arrangements for the division of the diocese of Quebec.

A voyage to Europe was then a very serious enterprise ; great preparations were made beforehand, and no prudent man undertook it, without first arranging all his spiritual and temporal affairs. For short as might be his sojourn in the old world, he could scarcely expect to return to America under a year. Mgr. Plessis took every precaution, in order that nothing should suffer during his absence, even though his voyage should be prolonged ; he devoted three entire weeks to the regulation of his affairs, and called to Quebec his venerable co-adjutor, into whose hands he placed the care of his diocese ; on that score he was without anxiety, for the prudence and wisdom of the Bishop of Saldes were well known to him.

Accompanied by Messieurs Lartigue and Turgeon, and escorted by a great number of ecclesiastics and citizens of Quebec, he embarked on the third of July 1819, upon the "George Symes," a Brig of 265 tons, commanded by Captain Bushby. The ladies of the General Hospital had lent him one of their trusty servants, known by the name of "John," formerly a slave in the Antilles, and attached to their house for many years in quality of confidential man. Careful,

intelligent, and a good christian, that man was a treasure to the travellers ; and proved an object of curiosity, on some occasions of their journey, being taken for a type of the Canadian ; for there were many in France, who by this time had forgotten the existence of Canada, and were surprised to learn, that beyond the great american republic, was an english province, where french was generally spoken.

We can scarcely understand at this day, the anxiety caused among the catholics of Canada by the departure of the Bishop of Quebec ; since the day when Mgr. Briand had taken possession of his See, no canadian Bishop had ever passed over to Europe. The clergy and the people were accustomed to the regularity of the proceedings, which the vigorous hand of the first pastor had communicated to their ecclesiastical affairs ; the helm was now confided to an old man, whose strength might fail him from one day to another ; and if some accident happened to Mgr. Plessis, what would become of the diocese ?

The honest people of the faubourgs of Quebec, particularly attached to their Bishop, remarked many sad signs ; a comet showed itself in the sky ; while a high mass was celebrating to obtain a fortunate voyage for the prelate, the tapers placed upon the altar went out by themselves. Later a rumour spread that the Bishop and his companions in crossing the Alps, had been set upon and eaten by savages ; that was a true legend of the Iroquois warriors.

But the *George Symes* was all this time rapidly approaching England with a fair wind, and on the 2nd August, the travellers disembarked at Liverpool, after a fortunate, and what was then considered, a quick passage.

The first exclamation of the Bishop after landing, as we gather from his journal, was a cry of distress. Accustomed to the vast horizon surrounding Quebec, and to the pure air of the shores of the Saint Lawrence, he could not avoid the contrast presented by Liverpool, and thus gives vent to his first impressions.

"What a city is this! What a noise! What darkness! How narrow are the first streets we enter! What a stench occasioned by the smoke of the coal! everything is affected by it: heads, breasts, linen, walls, apartments. Much time would be necessary to relate in detail all that Liverpool offers at first sight of the curious, and afterwards of the disagreeable to the eyes of a foreigner, especially if he is yet untravelled in England."

Compelled to wait for instructions, which were to be sent to him from London, Mgr. Plessis was condemned to pass ten days at Liverpool, without any business to occupy him. He visited the Catholic Institutions, and collected information on the state of the Catholic religion in that part of England.

"Foreigners" he writes "would not suspect that the Catholic religion had so many resources, in a Kingdom where it has been a prey to such numerous and violent persecutions. But God has there preserved his elected, and we may say to the praise of the English Catholics, that they are the most peaceable subjects of the empire. The Government renders them this justice, but has not yet resolved upon their emancipation from divers political considerations, of which the most probable is, their jealousy of the Irish, to whom they will not accord it."

"Added to that, is the unceasing opposition of the Anglican Clergy, who believe they would be ruined if Catholic emancipation were granted. On the other hand, the Catholics continue to petition Parliament for the measure, for they see with pain the noble families of their communion, excluded from the honors and places to which their birth entitles them. It is remarkable, that the premier Duke and the premier Earl of England are Catholics.* Besides these, there are many other Lords and Barons, who are obliged to live on their estates, without taking any part in public affairs; a deprivation which becomes a constant temptation to abandon the Catholic religion, and makes them

* The Duke of Norfolk and the Earl of Shrewsbury.

tremble for the perseverance of their children..... But in many respects Emancipation would do the Catholics more harm than good, in awakening a vanity and ambition to arrive at places which would be opened to them; and in throwing them into the society of protestants, to the prejudice of their faith and of their morals."

These predictions were in part realized, for when catholic emancipation was granted, some of the great lords, who had preserved exteriorly the religion of their fathers, rather from a sentiment of pride than attachment to the faith, renounced catholicism, which they regarded as placing them under greater restraint in worldly matters than protestantism would do."

From these reflexions upon the state of the catholic religion, the Bishop turned his looks towards Canada. "The inhabitants of Canada," said he, felicitate themselves with not having had to groan under the privations which the catholics endure in England. Alas! if they consider the thing from a religious point of view, they will find that they have gained nothing. Liberty of religion does not precisely consist in making processions in the streets, carrying the sacraments with solemnity in the open air, or following a funeral headed by the Clergy and the Crucifix. These exteriors have assuredly their advantages, and give to our ceremonies a pomp, from which God knows how to draw his glory. But independently of all these ceremonies, we may say that religion is free, when the faithful can exercise it in their houses and churches without being disturbed; hearing the word of God, chanting his praises and participating in the sacrifices. The english catholics enjoy these advantages and value them highly."

The Bishop remained longer at Liverpool than he intended, from a desire to find out the residence of Sir John Sherbrooke, with whom he deemed an interview necessary before presenting himself at London. He was informed that Sir John's residence was at the Village of Calverton, between Nottingham and Southwell; and thither he directed his steps.

He found Sir John Sherbrooke infirm, but preserving an exquisite memory, a sound judgment, and a heart open and loyal. The old General loved Lower Canada, and interested himself in the happiness of the country, much more than could have been expected from a man completely retired from public affairs. He replied with an admirable tact, and the best grace, to the numerous questions that the Bishop addressed to him on the different objects of his voyage. After a prolonged conversation, the Bishop separated from the General, with the painful thought that he should never see again that benevolent friend of Canada, who may be justly regarded as one of the wisest governors of the province.

Arriving at London on the 14th August, the prelate gave little time to curiosity; and occupied himself immediately, with the important business that had brought him to England. During his first stay he visited Westminster Abbey, Saint Paul's and Chelsea Hospital; but avoided everybody save those who could advance his purposes.

One of the first of these was Dr. Poynter, titular Bishop of Halie, and apostolical vicar of the district of London; a man who by his prudence and moderation, had known how, without compromising the principles of his faith, or the rules of discipline, to obtain the respect of the secretaries of state, while at the same time preserving the confidence of the Holy See. The counsels and credit of the apostolic vicar, could not fail to be very useful to the Bishop of Quebec, in his negociations with the Court of England.

Shortly after his arrival at London, Mgr. Plessis was much surprised to learn by a letter from Canada, that a few hours after his departure, bulls had arrived from the Holy See; nominating him Archbishop of Quebec, erecting his church into a Metropolitan See, and giving him for suffragans and auxiliaries, two Bishops; one for Upper Canada, and the other for New Brunswick and Prince Edward's Island: the first was Mr. Alexander MacDonell, and the second Mr. Bernard MacEachern.

The erection of the diocese of Quebec into an archbishopric disconcerted all his plans ; for as the British Government had not been informed of it, it was to be feared that the ministry might raise objections to the new divisions which it was his object to create.

It was therefore not without apprehensions, and anxieties, that he addressed himself to Lord Bathurst, colonial secretary, to whom he acknowledged frankly the state of things. The consequence was, that the minister was displeased, and called upon Dr. Poynter next day, to complain of the Court of Rome, and to beg that he would inform it of his dissatisfaction.

Mgr. Plessis notwithstanding, presented to Lord Bathurst three short memorials : in the first he asked permission of the British Cabinet, to solicit from the Holy See two new divisions of his diocese, to wit, that of Montreal, and that of the lands watered by the rivers which discharged themselves into Hudson's Bay.

In the second he solicited letters patent, to assure the existence of the Seminary of Nicolet, and for the establishment of a corporate body charged with the management of the affairs of that Institution.

The third memorial he had composed during the passage ; it contained some political observations, calculated to turn the ministry from the design of spoiling the Sulpiciens of their property. Without discussing the rights of the Seminary of Montreal, the Bishop established that the government would draw little profit from the property of that house, and showed the fatal effects that such a spoliation might produce upon the catholic population of Canada. After having expressed the regret that he experienced, on learning that the Provincial Government of Lower Canada thought of sequestering the properties of the Sulpiciens, he continued in these terms :

" If this demand proceeds from the persuasion that these ecclesiastics are not the real and true owners of the property which they occupy, they offer to produce satisfactory and peremptory proofs of the legality of

their possession. If this attack has been suggested under the pretext of any profit that may accrue to the Government, the undersigned humbly presents the following considerations :

1^o. That the profit will be reduced to something very inconsiderable, when the cost of the administration shall be set off, the charges and liabilities of the community be acquitted, admitting that there is no probability of any intention to destroy it."

" 2^o. Though even a profit of some consequence should result to the Provincial Government, that advantage would not balance the dissatisfaction, and disaffection, that such a proceeding would excite in the minds of the Catholic subjects of His Majesty in that Province ; especially those of the district of Montreal, daily witnesses of the truly exemplary and honorable employment that the Ecclesiastics of that Seminary make of their revenues."

" 3^o. The Government of His Majesty having always treated the Catholic subjects of Canada with a kindness unexampled, before even their loyalty was so well tried, it is surely not after coming out of a war, in which they gave such bright proofs of it, that they could expect a measure so rigorous, and of a nature so calculated to alarm the whole of them."

" 4^o. In despoiling the Seminary of Montreal of its property, the Catholic Church of Canada would be deprived of one of its principal resources for the instruction of youth and the formation and propagation of its Clergy."

" 5^o. The despoiling of one of the Ecclesiastical communities cannot fail to be considered by the inhabitants of the country as a warrant for the spoliation of all."

" 6^o. To attack the property of the Clergy, is to paralyze its influence over the people ; now in a country almost entirely Catholic, where during sixty years of conquest, the efforts of the Clergy have been constantly and efficaciously directed to inspiring the faithful with a sense of the dependence and submission due to the King and to his Government, you can-

not weaken that influence, without straining the strongest nerve, which connects the people of this country, with the government of his Majesty, to wit : that of the religion which it professes."

"The undersigned prays God that he may not live to witness the fatal consequences that would follow, upon the putting into execution a measure such as that in question. Meanwhile, he cannot avoid the conclusion, that those who have suggested it to the government, have neither consulted its dignity, its glory, or the true interests and deserts of a province, which by its sustained fidelity appears to have particular claims to the good-will and paternal affection of its Sovereign."

This warm appeal to the justice, and to the interests of England, had been submitted beforehand to the judgment of Sir John Sherbrooke, who had approved it; it produced a happy effect; for at a later period, it was declared by M. Lartigue, that the change in the ministerial policy with regard to the sequestration of the property of Saint Sulpice, was to be attributed principally to the influence of Mgr. Plessis.

A few days after having forwarded this memorial, the Bishop of Quebec learnt that Lord Bathurst had left precipitately for his country seat, without having come to any decision upon the question. He was full of perplexity at this delay, when he received a letter, in which his Lordship invited him to visit him at Cirencester the following week.

Cirencester was ninety miles from London, but Mgr. Plessis did not hesitate to undertake any journey that might advance his affairs; having recommended himself to God, he put himself *en route* with his secretary on the sixth of September, travelling by the stage coach. The Prelate was overwhelmed with civilities by Lord Bathurst and his family, he had been commended to the care of the countess, by her brother, the Duke of Richmond, and that lady showed herself full of good-will towards her guests. In a private interview with Lord Bathurst on the following morning, Mgr. Plessis immediately brought upon the

tapis, the questions he had advocated in the three memorials. The minister declared that he saw no difficulty in the way of granting Letters Patent for the seminary of Nicolet; upon the second memorial, relative to the seminary of Montreal, he wished to enter into some compromise; and proposed that the seminary of Montreal should cede its seignories to the government, preserving as many houses, farms and rents, as would be necessary for the subsistence of its present members and their successors. That proposition had already been made to M. Roux by the Duke of Richmond, and had been rejected. Mgr. Plessis replied, that though in fact the Bishop exercised a general surveillance over all the ecclesiastical property of his diocese, he was not permitted to dispose of it, because those who possessed it held the direct title; that according to instructions given at different times to the Governors of Canada, the seminaries of Quebec and Montreal, were to be maintained in all their property, of which they held valuable titles at the conquest of the country; and that consequently, His Majesty could not intend to dispossess the Sulpiciens, if they proved, that at the period of the conquest, they were the legal proprietors of their property. Now they believed themselves furnished with documents sufficient to prove that article; and that one of the members of their house, was then in London, and could give satisfactory proof of the above; that at all events, it would always be time to come to an understanding, if the seminary, contrary to the statement of the Bishop, did not succeed in proving its rights.

Lord Bathurst appeared satisfied, and willingly consented to receive the gentleman deputed by the Seminary of Montreal to prove their title. He showed himself much more opposed to the two new divisions of the diocese of Quebec, suggested by the Bishop; but it was plain that his resistance was that of a man, who did not wish to be unaccommodating. The Bishop urged therefore, without delay, the necessity of adopting the proposed measure; the lateness of the season rendered it necessary that he should

hasten his departure for Italy, and he could not put himself *en route*, without being furnished with the consent of the Cabinet of St. James, to the division which he asked for, in the dearest interests of his compatriots. "It was only with that view," he added, "that he had undertaken a painful and dangerous voyage, and that as his motive was pure, it was worthy of particular attention." Lord Bathurst appeared to cede a little, and told the Bishop that he would send a letter upon the subject to the Colonial office at London.

After having taken leave of the minister and his family, Mgr. Plessis hastened back to London, where he arrived on the 9th september, fatigued with his journey, but joyous at the success of his negotiation.

The promised letter came to him in due course, through Mr. Goulburn the under secretary of the colonies, and was drawn up in such a way, as to give him permission to plead at Rome, for bulls in favor of Messieurs Lartigue and Provencher, of whom the first was to be charged with the district of Montreal, and the second with the territory of the North-West. The Prince Regent as appeared from the following extract of the under secretary's letter approved the choice that had been made by the Prelate.

"As you express clearly, that the persons to be nominated will depend upon you, in your quality of Roman Catholic Bishop of Quebec, His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, full of confidence in your honor, your zeal, and your loyalty towards His Majesty's Government, has been pleased to consent to the arrangement you have proposed, and to permit M. Lartigue to fix himself at Montreal, and M. Provencher to remain in the Hudson's Bay Territory, in order that they may exercise respectively an ecclesiastical authority subordinate to your own, and to give you the required assistance in those parts of His Majesty's domains, professing the religion of the Church of Rome."

We should not be surprised on finding the word *Bishop* omitted in the above ; for so strong at that day

were the prejudices entertained in England, against the catholic hierarchy, that the greatest caution was necessary on the part of the ministry to avoid compromising themselves. The authority that the catholic Bishop of Quebec desired these two ecclesiastics to possess, besides the ordinary functions of grand vicars, was to enable them to confer the order of priesthood, and to give confirmation ; provided with these, they would be as completely clothed with the Episcopal character, as had been desired, and explicitly asked for by Mgr. Plessis ; and this in fact, was the understanding between the statesman and the bishop, though it was not expedient under existing circumstances, that they should both employ the same expressions. At the same time, Lord Bathurst had only consented to this arrangement, under the express condition that the new bishops should not be recognized as titulars by the government.

Comparing these concessions with the difficulties that Mgr. Briand had experienced fifty years before, the Bishop of Quebec could but appreciate the changes that had supervened in favor of his religion. In his journal he thus expresses himself :

“After eighteen or twenty months pleadings, Mgr. Briand obtained nothing at all ; they only gave him to understand indirectly, that if he was consecrated Bishop, the government would say nothing about it ; but would close their eyes to that proceeding. Ah ! what a change for the better since that epoch ; and how much does the church of Canada owe to divine providence, for having brought matters about, gently but substantially, to the point where we now see them !”

As soon as he arrived at Dover, he hastened to thank Lord Bathurst. “Furnished with this document,” said he to the minister, “I will solicit Bulls from the Court of Rome, for the appointment of two gentlemen, that His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, has deigned to accept for my co-operators.”

II

Calais—England and France—MM. Desjardins—Paris—Cardinal Fesch—
Savoy priests—Piedmont—Turin—Mezzofante—Prayer of the Hurons
at Lorette.

M. Lartigue remained in England to attend to the affairs of the Seminary of Montreal, while Mgr. Plessis and his Secretary set out for France.

The travellers disembarked at Calais on the 17th September. In spite of his predilection for England, the Bishop of Quebec rejoiced at last to hear the french language spoken.

"We can almost fancy ourselves at home," he writes, "when after having during six weeks, heard nothing but a foreign language spoken, we find ourselves in the midst of a people speaking our own. The result is a feeling of delight which is quite overpowering."

But more accustomed to British usages, he had much trouble in accommodating himself to french habits; the diligences, the hotels, seemed to him much inferior to every thing of the kind that he had seen in England, as we may see by the account he gives of his first observations in France.

"After having travelled in the elegant carriages of England, drawn by horses well groomed, and nobly harnessed, one recoils almost with horror at the sight of the gloomy and lumbering carriages of France; set upon wheels as thick as those of chariots, and drawn by horses, vigorous enough, but thin, dirty, and put to with ropes, or bad leather, and broad collars surmounted with four or five pounds of blue or red wool.....

"The roads though inferior to those of England, were nevertheless good, and we found them the same all through France..... The hotels of France cannot be compared to those of England, either for order or cleanliness. The French do not seem to know the use of carpets, and the apartments are generally paved instead of being boarded; which

strangers find very unpleasant to the feet, and still more so to the knees when they wish to pray."

On the other hand, the country appeared to him more smiling in France than in England.

"More streams, more groves; the isolated trees, even, do not present the same monotony; the valleys are more varied, the fields broader and not divided as in the other Kingdom, like the squares of a chess board....Extreme care is taken of the trees by the road side, and there are very few places where this is neglected."

It was half-past ten in the evening, when on the 19th September, the travellers entered Paris. Descending from the diligence, the Bishop to his great surprise heard his name pronounced by a person whom he had never met before. "Quick, quick," said the stranger, "my brother expects you with impatience, I am sent to conduct you to the Foreign Missions."

This welcome invitation was addressed to him, by the brother of M. l'Abbé Desjardins, the intimate friend of Mgr. Plessis; who had been on the constant watch for many days, to receive the Bishop of Quebec and his companion, on their leaving the diligence. That respectable layman endowed like his brother, with a frank and open character, obliging and generous, held the patrimonial estate of the family at Messas, near Beaugency; and being at Paris on business, undertook to receive the two Canadian travellers, and to conduct them to the Seminary of Foreign Missions. In a quarter of an hour afterwards, Mgr. Plessis was in the presence of the venerable Abbé Desjardins, the sincere joy he experienced in meeting with an old friend, from whom he had been separated for seventeen years, can be better conceived than expressed.

M. Desjardins had been a canon of Bayeux, and was afterwards collegiate dean of Meung, and vicar general of the bishop of Orleans; but the revolution had compelled him to seek an asylum in England, where he arrived in 1792. There he became ac-

quainted with the celebrated Edmund Burke, who was connected with the Bishop of Saint Pon-de-Léon, and who interested himself much in the fate of the French priests. These two gentlemen had proposed to the English government, that some persons should be sent to Canada, to examine if it were possible to find some asylum for the French ecclesiastics and laymen, then so numerous in England. The project was welcomed with favor by the ministry, and Messieurs Desjardins, Gazel and Raimbault were charged with examining on the spot, if there were any chances of success ; they were accompanied by a Canadian, M. de La Corne, chevalier of St. Louis. From New York, where they disembarked, on the 8th February, 1793, they travelled by land to Canada. The bishops and clergy gave them a good reception. M. Desjardins occupied himself with collecting the necessary instructions for the object of his mission, and visited Upper Canada, where a certain number of emigrants desired to establish themselves. The year following, many priests joined him, and among them his young brother, M. Desplantes.

M. Desjardins had been successively grand vicar to the bishops Hubert and Denaut ; M. Plessis at the same period held the cure of Quebec, and a warm and intimate friendship had existed between them. In 1802, ill health obliged M. Desjardins to return to France, carrying with him the regrets of numerous friends, whom he had attached by his fine qualities, and by the charm of his conversation. In Canada he had been treated badly enough by one of the Lieutenant-Governors ; in France a series of persecutions followed him. In 1806, he had been named curé of the Foreign Mission at Paris, and took up his domicile at the seminary of that name. Shortly after, the Duke of Kent who had had relations with him in Quebec, addressed some letters to him at Paris, expressive of his good will ; this was sufficient to draw upon him the distrust of Napoleon, who accused him of disloyalty. In the month of October, 1810, he was seized by the police, and confined at Vincennes, from

thence he was transferred successively to Fenestrelle, from thence to Campiano, and finally to Verceil. For four years he had been submitted to a cruel and unmerited exile, to the prejudice of his affairs, his health and his ministry, and did not re-enter France till after the fall of the Empire.

During the whole of this long persecution, the Abbé had broken off all communication with the outer world; but after his enlargement, he resumed correspondence with his friends in Canada, and above all with Mgr. Plessis, with whom he had ever since continued it with great regularity.*

Eager to arrive at Rome, the prelate only stopped a few days at Paris with his old friend. He had, however, an opportunity of making acquaintance with a great number of French prelates. Some of them had been consecrated before the revolution; others named Bishops by virtue of the concordat of 1817. These latter, had not taken the Bulls of the Holy See, which confirmed their appointment, out of the bureau of the Secretary of State; in consequence of the unwillingness of the government, to see the number of Bishops augmented; though that measure was an urgent necessity for the good of religion.

At first sight, Paris does not appear to have come up to the idea formed of it by Mgr. Plessis.

"In short," he says, "if we except the boulevards, the new street of Rivoli, and those which are upon the Quays of the Seine, all the rest of the streets of this

* M. Desjardins refused, in 1817, the Bishopric of Blois, and in 1823 that of Châlons-sur-Marne. In 1819, Cardinal Périgord, Archbishop of Paris, named him Grand Vicar and Archdeacon of Saint Geneviève, with apartments in the Archiepiscopal palace. At the pillage of this palace in 1831, he lost his library, his pictures, his furniture and all the money he possessed. He was then at Confians, from whence he escaped with Mgr. Quélen, archbishop of Paris. The Abbé Desjardins died the 18th October, 1833. It is to him that Canada owes a great number of the fine paintings which were offered for sale in this country, at a price so moderate, that many churches were able to purchase them for the purpose of replacing their worthless stock. These pictures carried off during the Revolution from Monasteries, Convents or Churches, had been tossed into lofts, from whence they were drawn at the commencement of the Empire and sold at auction. Desirous of enriching Canada with some good pictures, M. Desjardins purchased them, and sent them to his brother, then Chaplain at the Hotel-Dieu, Quebec. Up to his death he was the protector and friend of the young Canadians who went to study at Paris.

city, so much praised for its beauty, are so narrow, so dirty, so offensive and so noisy, that necessity alone, can compel a proprietor to build his house with the front towards them. For fifty years they have boasted of the illumination of the streets of Paris during the night. But what kind of an illumination? Lanterns suspended in the middle of the streets, at a hundred feet distance the one from the other; better calculated to assist, than to hinder the evil doer. How different this from the great cities of England, and of London in particular, where the lamps at a distance of less than thirty feet, placed on each side of the street over the pathway, turn night into a sort of day."

Since that period Paris has undergone a great change, and to day takes its rank at the head of the finest cities in Europe.

As the favorable season for travelling was soon about to close, the Bishop of Quebec set out for Rome on the twenty-eighth of September, with M. Turgeon and the faithful *John*. He preserved the hope of seeing on his return many ecclesiastics and respectable laymen, from whom he had received much civility; of that number was the venerable Cardinal de Perigord, Archbishop of Paris, who had particularly testified his good-will towards him.

Accustomed to the grand and beautiful on the shores of the St. Lawrence, the two travellers found the scenery of the interior of France very monotonous; yet truth drew from them, from time to time, acknowledgments in its favor. At a halting place, three leagues from Lyons, the beauty of the weather, and a good road tempted them to proceed on foot for the space of a league, while their travelling companions were breakfasting. Arrived at an elevated point, they discovered an admirable country: the view extended over fields, vineyards, chateaux, orchards, groves, and villas. Beyond that vast tableau, towards the North, was a range of mountains terraced one above the other; such a magnificent spectacle struck

the bishop profoundly, who thus describes it in his journal :

"God seems to have wished to unite at this single point, all the riches of nature, of which he has elsewhere distributed but a portion, and that with a sort of economy. In good faith, one must acknowledge, that the view of the North shore of the Saint Lawrence taken from Quebec, a view so justly vaunted, is inferior to this. It remains to be seen if the continuation of our journey will procure us a view preferable, or even comparable to that of St. Joachim."

While however, recognizing the beauty of the country, M. Turgeon remarked to the bishop, that it would be necessary to transport the St. Lawrence in the midst of that imposing and brilliant picture, in order to raise it to the picturesqueness of the environs of Quebec. Both agreed that the absence of a river, or lake, diminished the effect of so many beauties united at one point.

As the travellers desired to make acquaintance with the celebrated city of Lyons, they decided on passing some days there ; wishing above all, to gather the traditions of the antique church of St. Irénée, and to study its liturgy, brought from the East by its first bishops.

For many years the Archbishop of Lyons, cardinal Fesch, uncle of Bonaparte, was compelled to absent himself from his metropolitan city. Named Archbishop by the concordat of 1801, Mgr. Fesch had repaired the churches at Lyons, devastated during the revolution ; he had worked energetically to re-establish worship in his diocese, and had profited by his favor with the Emperor, to put on foot many religious establishments, of which the other dioceses of France remained deprived.

Proscribed by the restoration, together with the whole of the Bonaparte family, he withdrew to Rome : though removed so far from his diocese, and without any hope of being able to return, he occupied himself constantly with the interests of his church, and ex-

perienced a lively satisfaction when he learned that all was kept in order.

At the head of the ecclesiastical administration, was M. Courbon, premier vicar general of the cardinal. That meritorious man was the soul of the diocese; his age, his learning, his piety, attracted to him the respect and the esteem of the people and clergy of Lyons. The Bishop of Quebec was indebted to him for many civilities, and was greatly edified by the conversation of the venerable grand vicar, who invited him to stop in that city when he returned, in order to make the ordinations of lent.

The approach of the rainy season, and its bad roads, hurried Mgr. Plessis from Lyons, where he only remained four days, leaving for Italy on the eleventh October.

M. Turgeon had entered into a bargain with a coach proprietor, who for the sum of eighty dollars had given up the interior of his carriage to the two ecclesiastics, placing their servant John in the cabriolet.

In traversing Savoy, Mgr. Plessis came in contact with many of the priests of the country, who inspired him with a high opinion of their clergy: he could but recall the fear which was formerly experienced in Canada, when Sir Frederick Haldimand had spoken of introducing there, some Savoyard ecclesiastics. "But certainly," remarks the prelate in his diary "if they were all like these, they would have been an acquisition. These gentlemen had all left the seminary of Chambéry, and had been selected for their great regularity and their general merits."

After having spoken of their attachment to their country, he adds: "Small as Savoy is, it is not rare to find ecclesiastics becoming curés without ever leaving their country. He who had gone to Turin, or on the other hand to Grenoble, passed for a travelled man. But if he had seen Lyons, or Milan, or Genoa! he became a marvel; and they ranged themselves around him to listen in silence, while he related the wonderful things he had met in those long and ex-

traordinary excursions. We may then imagine their surprise at seeing among them, men from Canada! Geography had taught them, that such a country existed; but that any one would dare to come from Canada to Savoy, was an enterprise, the boldness of which had scarcely entered into their heads."

The passage of Mont Ceniz, reminded the travellers of the cold they had experienced on similar journeys in Canada; but in their descent they soon reached an agreeable country.

"Piedmont," wrote the Bishop, "is a very fertile country, forming a striking contrast to the poverty of Savoy. The fields, of great extent, are cultivated like gardens. The vines are not as in France, mere shrubs, but are very high and big, each being attached to a tree. These trees, are commonly elms, and are planted over the whole of the lands, in a straight line, which extends beyond the reach of the eye. This way of connecting the vine to the trees, and ornamenting the sown fields, is not confined to Piedmont, it is common all over Italy where good wine abounds. Who, that sees the vine thus united with the elm, could help recalling the *ulmisque adjungere vites* of Virgil? From the time of that poet, without doubt, the same kind of culture has been kept up to this day."

"Nearly everywhere in Piedmont, are to be found small plots of ground on the border of the road, not only with crosses planted, but with little chapels, or square columns twelve feet high, upon which are painted pious images. In the villages, the shops have often for their signs similar paintings upon their walls; these evidences of public piety are pleasant to catholic eyes, and make one feel that he is approaching the centre of religion."

In the sacristy of the metropolitan church of Turin, the canadian traveller had to sustain a rude assault from the curiosity of the canons. All pressed around the foreign Bishop: the old questioned him in italian; the others listened to his replies, given in latin, to a crowd of questions exhibiting little knowledge of the New World. Are there any christians in that country?—

Are the Canadians white or black?—That negro who follows you, is he one of them?—Is it long since you left Europe to go and live so far off?—Do you think of returning there? Nor was Turin the only place where it was necessary to submit to similar interrogatories, provoking alternately, laughter and impatience.

Milan, Parma, Bologna, Ancôna and Lorette, passed in turn under the eyes of the visitors. At Bologna, the Cardinal Legate wished to procure for the Bishop the pleasure of knowing a man, who at that time was beginning to be much spoken of. That was the abbé Mezzofante, since so celebrated throughout the world, as the most extraordinary linguist who has ever existed.

Mgr. Plessis speaks thus of him in his journal.

"It is something astonishing," says he, "the facility with which this ecclesiastic, who appears to be about forty years of age, takes into his head all the languages that he wishes to learn. He has never been in France or in England, but whether speaking in French or in English, it is with a purity of language, and an exactitude of pronunciation, that would make one believe that he had passed half his life in one kingdom, and half in the other."

The Bishop of Quebec expressed afterwards to the Cardinal Legate, the pleasure with which he had seen the abbé Mezzofante. "He has much merit," replied His Eminence, "but unfortunately he is the son of a carpenter." To the Canadian Prelate, accustomed to measure men by their merit and not by their birth, the Abbé Mezzofante only appeared the more estimable; "But," as he remarks, "in Europe, the nobility have a different way of seeing things."

At Lorette, whilst visiting the treasury of *la santa Casa*, where are deposited the offerings sent from all parts of the world, he was much surprised to find, framed and glazed, the following prayer in French and in Latin :

"Prayer of the Huron Nation, sent to Laurette to supplicate the Blessed Virgin to procure the conver-

sion of the Indians of the whole of New France in the year 1673."

"O Mary, Servant of God, above all ; as we have learnt that all the nations who have had before us, the happiness of submitting to your domain, send you as a mark of their gratitude some *régale* of that which is most esteemed among them ; we have thought that we were obliged to imitate them in offering you of that which we hold of the most precious among us ; and as our poverty furnishes nothing which is dearer to us than our porcelain, which is to us like pearls to richer people, we have agreed by general consent to prepare you a collar, and to engrave thereon your own words, which has raised you to the dignity of the Mother of God. We desire that these characters in porcelain be presented to you as a mark that our hearts belong to you, and that they may be an immortal testimony of the part that we take in all your greatness. Suffice then, Holy Virgin, that we make you this little present. It is from all your subjects of this new world, who come to render you homage, and to recognize you for Queen in the House, where you would wish to be only a servant...."

The bishop sought to procure some information touching the porcelain collar mentioned in the above prayer, but could find no vestige of it.

The collar had been sent at the time by Father Chaumonot, founder of the Huron Mission of our Lady of Lorette ; he mentions it in these terms :

"I caused them to be made by my Hurons a fine large collar of porcelain ; the white of it forming the ground, and the black of it well formed letters, expressing these divine words—" *Ave Maria, gratia plena.*" The Jesuit father, penitentiary of the French, to whom it had been addressed, caused it to be set in a gilt frame, with an inscription which noted that the Huron Nation, newly converted to the faith, offered that present to the Mother of God.

III

Rome—the Pope and the Cardinals—Bulls of Messieurs Lartigue and Provencher—departure from Rome—Turin—Count Joseph de Maistre—Abbé Gazel—Lyons—from Roanne to Orleans—Messas—Paris—M. Mermet—Departure.

Like most travellers who arrive at Rome for the first time, the Bishop of Quebec was greatly surprised at the solitude which pervades the country environs of the Eternal City.

“The approaches to this famous city,” he says in his journal, “we supposed to be through orchards, chateaux, cultivated and smiling fields. It is thus that the imagination of those who have never been there, amuses itself, but they are deceived. In the whole distance there is not a tree, not a field, ever so little cared for, not even a habitation, except some scattered houses that one perceives at a long distance, and two small villages. This part of the patrimony of St. Peter is a true *Thébaïde*, sad and wearying by its extreme solitude. It is like approaching the end of the world, rather than the great city, which has for so many ages been looked upon as the centre of it.”

It was the 12th of November when the travellers arrived at Rome, and as they would have to remain there for three months, they decided to lease apartments in a private house, rather than remain at the hotel where they had at first put up. Thanks to the complaisance of a friend of the Marquis de Montmorency, who had given them letters of recommendation at Paris, they secured very agreeable accommodation.

Sincerely attached to the traditions and to the faith of the catholic church, Mgr. Plessis experienced a new happiness in finding himself in the bosom of the capital of the christian world ; to visit places consecrated by the presence of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and of so many venerable pontiffs, and to

tread a soil watered with the blood of thousands of martyrs. On the other hand after having studied seriously the Latin classics as he had done, he could not survey without a lively interest, the theatre of the principal events of Roman History.

"Rome" he wrote "is not the most beautiful city in the world, but it is assuredly the most celebrated, the most worthy of fixing the attention of the stranger, and exalting his imagination by souvenirs of all kinds ; by the monuments profane and religious, ancient and modern, with which it is filled. The soul feels elevated from the reflexion, that one is walking in the same places and in the same streets, trodden formerly by the wise Numa, the sober Quintus Fabius, of Camillus, Scipio, Pompey, Cicero, Cæsar and Constantine. But that sentiment acquires another energy, when a christian recognizes there, the places watered with the sweat of the apostles ; and with the blood of the martyr ; when he sees the chief of the catholic church, reigning there, as a sovereign, and causing true religion, and every virtue to reign upon the same throne, where so many impious and flagitious tyrants have formerly been seated as masters ; and in the same city which was so long delivered to the false worship of every kind of false divinities."

The prelate's journal furnishes us with the following passages, upon the Pontifical Government, and upon the chiefs of the state ; and our readers will doubtless like to see the opinions of such a man upon these subjects.

"Considered in a political aspect, the Sovereign Pontiff has unlimited authority, his will is law ; but that despotism does not tend necessarily to injure his people. On the contrary, it is acknowledged that the Government of the Ecclesiastical State, is the most gentle and paternal that exists in the world. If it can be reproached with any thing, it is more with a defect of energy, than an abuse of authority.

"Evil disposed writers, some of them protestants, and others bad catholics, have exclaimed much

against the luxury of the Cardinals, and have represented them as altogether occupied with vanity, and leading an idle and voluptuous life. Nothing could be more calumnious than these imputations. The Cardinals are generally persons who reach that dignity through their piety, their knowledge and the services they have rendered to the church, in less important situations. Arrived at the purple, they lead a very retired life, rarely entertained from home, and more rarely still entertaining others at their own houses. If they dwell in palaces, have servants and carriages, they only do the same as the foreign ambassadors, princes and nobles of the pontifical state, who are all inferior to them in dignity; for each of the cardinals may be called to the sovereign pontificate, and they are really to the Court of Rome, what princes of the blood are in other Courts. If this is admitted, we have no right to complain that they keep up a certain decorum; we should rather be edified by their modesty and the employment that those among them who have private wealth, make of their riches; the others reduced to a salary of five thousand scudi per annum which is allotted them by the Pope, have not the means of making a very great display, even supposing they had the inclination. But they are more remarkable for their alms, their regularity and their piety, than for that pretended luxury which is attributed to them, by the malevolence of those who would like to find everything bad in the Court of Rome, and by the ignorance of others, who, not having seen for themselves, are the dupes of these calumnies."

On the 17th November, the Bishop of Quebec submitted to the Congregation of the Propaganda, the business which had led him to Rome. In the course of many conferences with Cardinal Fontana, Prefet of the Propaganda, and many other members of the same Congregation, he presented a memorial proving the necessity of dividing his diocese. Two divisions had already been accepted by the court of Rome, those of New Brunswick and Upper Canada. He

now asked that the remainder might be still farther divided into three parts. The first to contain the district of Montreal, the second formed of the country situated to the north and north-west of Canada, and watered by the rivers which fall into Hudson's Bay. The districts of Quebec, of Three-Rivers and of Gaspé, would compose the third, and would remain under the immediate care of the Bishop of Quebec; while each of the four others would be confided to a suffragan Bishop. He declared at the same time, that for himself and his suffragans, it was impossible to watch over that portion of North America, extending between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean. He renewed also the demand that had been made for many years, that the Island of Anticosti, and the portion of the Coast of Labrador which was to the north of the River St. John, should be confided to the Apostolic Vicar of Newfoundland, seeing that they had been united in 1809, by an Act of the British Parliament to the Civil Government of that Colony.

Shortly after, he was presented to the Sovereign Pontiff, who received him with great kindness; Pius VII granted him a second audience in the month of January 1820, and a third, on the fourth of February following. On the latter occasion the Bishop of Quebec asked permission, to lay aside the title of Metropolitan, while the English Government showed themselves opposed to it.

The well known merit, and the credit which he enjoyed with the British Government, induced the Pontiff to accede to his request; and allowed the Bishop to choose his own time to assume publicly the title of Archbishop of Quebec.

Many other privileges were accorded him in favor of churches, religious communities, and pious institutions; and he was himself erected a Roman Count and assistant at the pontifical throne. During his stay at Rome, his fine qualities acquired him the friendship of Cardinal Pacca, president of the Apostolic Chamber; and that of Cardinal Consalvi, secre-

tary of state, both of whom gave him many marks of their esteem.

It was a great satisfaction to the worthy Bishop, when he learnt that the Sovereign Pontiff approved the project of dividing the diocese of Quebec. On the first of February, the Holy Father signed the Bulls of M. Provencher, naming him Bishop of Juliopolis, and giving him spiritual jurisdiction over the Northwest Territory; as also the Bulls, naming M. Jean Jacques Lartigue, Bishop of Telmesse, and administrator of the district of Montreal.

The day which Mgr. Plessis had fixed upon for his departure approached; but there still remained some interesting objects in the city and vicinity unvisited. The Marquis de Fuscaldo, the Neapolitan Ambassador, urged him strongly to visit Naples, but as no religious object could be served, the Bishop felt bound to forego the invitation. The only excursion which he regretted having neglected, was that to Ostia, where in examining the old embouchure of the Tiber, he would have had the consolation of paying his respects to the place where the mother of Saint Augustin died. But he was already impatient to commence his journey homeward, and as he feared that the Government Offices once closed for the Carnival, would not be opened again during Lent, he made great exertions to obtain the apostolic Briefs; and a solution of some of the difficulties, which he had laid before the Propaganda. Minor matters, such as the transmission of documents, &c., he could leave to the care of an agent.

On the 9th February he bade adieu to his friends, and went to receive the last benediction of Pius VII, while M. Turgeon engaged a conveyance. On the 10th the travellers after a three month's residence, left the Eternal City, and turned towards their own country. They passed through Sienne and Florence, and in the latter city learnt the death of George III. They had heard of the death of the Duke of Kent before leaving Rome. At Florence they had hoped to meet Sir Gordon Drummond, but the General had

left the preceding autumn to pass the winter at Naples. They were at Turin on the 27th February ; the second sunday in Lent was passed in that Seaport city, then considered one of the finest in Europe.

Having accepted an invitation to the house of the Marquis d'Azeglio, the Bishop had the good fortune to meet there, at dinner, Count Joseph de Maistre, whose reputation was not then so extended, as it became afterwards.

" This well informed man," says the Bishop in his journal, " published during his legation to the Court of Russia, a work intituled : *Considerations sur la France*, which was well received by the public, and gave him a great reputation. He afterwards published another work, called *Du Pape*. The Bishop of Quebec had observed how much he should be flattered in receiving a copy from the hand of the author, and the Count brought him one the same evening to his Hotel." That book with the signature of the christian philosopher, is carefully preserved in the library of the Archbishop of Quebec.

The Bishop and his companion crossed the Alps over Mount Cénis ; the season was very severe, and at the most elevated part of the ascent, it became necessary to dismount the carriage, putting the wheels and shafts upon one sledge, and the body upon another ; the whole was drawn by six mules raised to this kind of work. In places, the snow was heaped to the height of six feet, and when the wind blew it raised a true *poudrerie* Canadienne.

In journeying towards Italy the preceding year, the travellers had promised Dom Bernard, Guardian of the Hospital of Mount Cénis, that they would visit him in the month of February ; on the 29th of that month they arrived there. " It is fortunate " remarked the good monk " that the year is bissextile, or we should not have had the honor of seeing you in February."

At Chambéry they found the Abbé Gazel, who had emigrated to England at the commencement of the French revolution, and passed from thence to Canada, where he remained during three or four years. In

1821, he performed the functions of Canon to the Cathedral, and was professor of Theology in the Grand Seminary. Hearing that the Bishop of Quebec was at an Hotel in the City, and about to pursue his journey immediately, he hastened to see the travellers, that he might enjoy the pleasure of talking of Canada till the moment of their departure.

As Mgr. Plessis had promised M. Courbon and Cardinal Fesch, to stop at Lyons and assist in conferring Holy orders on those Ecclesiastics who were disposed to receive them; he remained a few days in that great city, and ordained many priests; among whom was the Abbé Deguerry, who afterwards became one of the most celebrated orators of Paris.

M. Desjardins, the elder, in order to accomplish the ardent desire he had formed of receiving the two friends of his brother in his house at Messas, had recommended them to pass through Orleans on their road to Paris, travelling by carriage from Lyons to Roanne and then to descend the river Loire by boat. M. Jars, formerly mayor of Roanne, had procured them a boatman, who undertook to convey them and their baggage to Orleans, in a small boat only 12 feet long. The passage from Roanne to Orleans, seventy leagues, occupied five days. They were received very kindly by Mgr. de Varicourt, the new Bishop of Orleans, who had invited his confrere of Canada beforehand. M. Jacques Desjardins waited for them some days, and then conducted them to Messas, where the Bishop was received with much joy, not only by his hosts but by the entire population of the village.

"You must not expect" observes Mgr. Plessis "to find much of the beautiful in that village. It is half a league in length, but not a tree, or garden ever so little ornamented; the houses uniformly constructed, are very low and have very small windows; those on the principal street present nothing but the gable end. But the moral aspect of Messas is excellent. If you would see an antique simplicity, patriarchal morals, watchful fathers, submissive children, modest girls

and boys, sober and reserved, you must come to Messas. It seems that this little spot alone, has been preserved from the fatal ravages of the revolution."

"The arrival of a Bishop, an event that had not happened in the memory of man, created an inconceivable sensation. The spindles fell from the hands of the women; The vine dressers who have work in the field, even at that season, had returned before the ordinary hour, and lined the streets clothed in their blouses; the children ran after the carriage; and every body was full of joy. M. Desjardins at once the father and the friend of all the villagers, and to whom the commune in general, and each of its members in particular, owed many obligations, wished them to receive with jubilation the foreign Bishop and his secretary that he had brought to them. As soon as the travellers had left the carriage, he hastened to present them to his sister, his good sister, the angel of his house. Raguel was not more transported with joy at the arrival of the young Tobias and his travelling companion."

The Bishop of Quebec arrived at Paris on the first of April, and resumed his lodgings at the Seminary of foreign missions, where he found the abbé Desjardins, who still resided there occasionally, though he lived principally at the archbishopric, and had been replaced in his cure by the abbé M. Desgenettes.

I owe a reparation to the honor of the French Capital," writes Mgr. Plessis on arriving the second time at Paris; "it has more beautiful streets than this journal has in the first place allowed it; a proof that we see better the second time than the first. Though it cannot be expected that these streets, unprovided with pathways, can in any way enter into competition with those of London or even of Turin.* On the other hand, the parks of London which are the finest promenades of that city, cannot approach those of Paris."

* Things have changed and Paris is to day the finest City in the world.

On his second visit to Paris, the Bishop was enabled to make a longer stay, and he visited with much interest, the public establishments, the charitable institutions, and above all the churches. He heard a discourse from the abbé Frayssinous, then the first preacher at Paris : and two from the abbé McCarthy, who held the second place in the pulpits of the capital. "The abbé McCarthy," remarks Mgr. Plessis, "is in reality a Jesuit father, for the Company of Jesus seeks to re-establish itself in France under the name of *Pères de la Foi*. All they have to do is to take the name of monsieur l'abbé and to call their colleges, seminaries."

The abbé Barruel, who was also a jesuit, had joined his confrères in their house of the *Rue des Postes*, where the Bishop of Quebec went to see them. The good abbé was more convinced than ever, that all the plagues which had desolated Europe for the last thirty years, were brought on the world by free-masonry. He pretended to have made new discoveries upon this subject, since the publication of his memoirs upon the History of Jacobinism.

Through the interposition of the Bishop of Chartres, grand chaplain to the count d'Artois, (afterwards Charles X,) Mgr. Plessis was presented to that Prince, then looked upon as the anchor of salvation for the Bourbons. He had entertained no hope or thought of seeing the King, when he learnt that the marquise de Villeray * had obtained for him an interview with the French monarch, through the influence of duke de la Chartre, first gentleman in waiting to Louis XVIII. The affair of the introduction, was too far advanced when the Bishop knew it, to admit of his drawing back. It was therefore arranged that the presentation should take place on sunday, after the King's breakfast, and the Bishop presented himself punctually. The audience was private ; the King spoke

* Madame de Villeray was descended from the family of the sieur Rouer de Villeray, who came to Canada with M. de Lauzon. He married at Quebec and became a member of the Superior Council. The family of Villeray disappeared from the colony about the time of the conquest.

to Mgr. Plessis with kindness, and put many questions relating to the state of religion in Canada ; requested to be remembered in his prayers, and charged him with saying to his diocesans, that their former sovereign had not forgotten them, and that if the conditions stipulated for in their favor by the treaty of peace, were not observed by England ; France would not neglect to claim them. The King being confined by gout, they were about to prepare an altar in his apartment to enable him to hear mass, the Bishop therefore withdrew, satisfied with the kind welcome he had received.

Circumstances prevented Mgr. Plessis from returning to Messas, as he had proposed ; but he had the pleasure of seeing M. Jacques Desjardins who came to Paris, to place himself at the Bishop's orders, and rendered him numerous services, and did not leave him, till he saw him into the diligence ; where he parted from him with all those expressions of devotion, respect and esteem, which could only have been dictated by a heart full of benevolence and generosity.

During his stay at Paris, the Bishop met many members of canadian families, who had emigrated into France after the cession of Canada to England. The son of the celebrated baron de Léry, in a letter written to his relations in Canada, mentions the pleasure he had experienced at seeing the Bishop of the country where his father was born.

There was one man in France that the Bishop had greatly desired to see, that was M. Mermet who had sang so nobly and so well the victory of Chateaugay. This distinguished poet had passed many years in Canada, first as Lieutenant, and afterwards as Captain in the regiment of De Watteville ; composed of prisoners of the French army, taken during the wars of the Empire, and commanded by legitimist officers who had emigrated into England. After the American war the English had given lands upon the Ottawa, to the officers and privates of that regiment who wished to remain in the country. Very few officers profited by that advantageous offer, the others,

after the return of the Bourbons, believed that fortune would smile upon them in France, and that the Sovereign would not fail to reward the legitimists for their fidelity.

A happy fortune would undoubtedly have smiled upon M. Mermet, had he remained in Canada; for he was a man of fine intellect, sincerely attached to the Catholic religion, and beloved by all who knew him. His relations with the Bishop of Quebec had been frequent and amicable, and he had addressed many elegant pieces of poetry to the prelate. Like his companions, he had preferred France, and had decided to reject a certainty in Canada, for great expectations in his own country. The Bishop of Quebec had attempted, but uselessly, to retain him in Canada; representing that in a new country, in the midst of his numerous Canadian friends, he was always sure of finding a position suitable to his talents and capacity, and that he might easily provide for the welfare of his family. Scarcely had he entered France, when he repented bitterly, the imprudent step he had taken; the number of legitimists was very large, and there were few places at the disposal of the Sovereign. M. Mermet was lost among the clamorous crowd, and could obtain nothing but the cross of Saint Louis. The straitened circumstances in which he found himself, afflicted him profoundly, especially on account of his two sons, whom he wished to have qualified for the Ecclesiastical state. He was living at Marseilles in retirement and obscurity, when a letter from the Bishop of Quebec, on his return from Rome, recalled to him his friends in Canada; and the happy moments he had passed there with them. His reply to the prelate was full of gratitude, affection and respect, but it bore the marks of sorrow, and showed him full of anxiety for the future.*

"I have bathed with tears of gratitude," wrote M. Mermet, "the gracious epistle with which your Lordship has been pleased to honor me, and after having

* Letter of M. J. Mermet, to the Bishop of Quebec, 27th March, 1820.

read it over and over again, I exclaimed to myself with as much truth as veneration : *undè hoc mihi ?* Ah ! my Lord, if I am so sensible to the marks of affection that your Lordship has testified towards me, with so much benevolence, I am pleased to think, that you can form some conception of the extent of the grief which I experience, in finding myself deprived of the sweet consolation of seeing again the most worthy of prelates.....

“ I am infinitely affected, my Lord, at the felicitation with which you so graciously honor me, on the mark of distinction that the King has accorded to me, as the sole recompense of twenty-five campaigns, and six wounds, received under the flag of legitimacy. I accept with as much humility as gratitude the wishes, that your lordship has deigned to address me, and above all, that one which seeks to inspire me, with the hope of making a better provision for my family ; in reading your pious expression of that last wish, my whole family shed tears of the most sincere gratitude.....

“ In the epistle that I addressed to your Grace, perhaps I painted the condition of France in colors too dark ; still, our epidemic is about to communicate itself to Spain, and I tremble for the whole of Europe, above all for the Holy See. If a barrier is not opposed to these impieties, we shall too soon behold the Gallican Church ruling itself after the manner of the Anglican Church ; and other other churches will follow that dangerous torrent. Then the hand of the Most High will spread over us the veil which already covers Asia and Africa : the religion of our divine Saviour will flow towards America ; Quebec may perhaps become the capital of the christian world, and the All-powerful after having sufficiently punished us, will spread the benefits of revelation over the whole earth.

“ Yes, I regret sincerely that I have not followed the wise counsels that your Lordship deigned to give me with so much benevolence, on the evening of the 26th August, 1816. You counselled me then with

much kindness to remain in Canada. Alas ! I left my friends on the St. Lawrence, I abandoned 500 acres of land, to find myself isolated and without fortune, in the breast of my ungrateful country....”

This letter was accompanied by an epistle in verse, in which the poet sang the praises of the prelate, and recalled some souvenirs of Canada.

On the first of May, the two Canadian travellers left Paris for England, the evening before they had said adieu to the venerable Abbé Desjardins, whom they saw for the last time, and who would willingly have accompanied them, to see once more, before he died, his well-beloved brother and his old friends in Canada.

IV

Perplexities of M. Lartigue—George IV. departure for America—Arrival at New-York—Philadelphia—Baltimore—Presentation at Montreal, of M. Lartigue—Letter of M. Emery—Triumphal arrival at Quebec—*Te Deum* and thanksgivings.

M. Lartigue had remained in London till the middle of the month of October, 1819, in the hope of obtaining an audience with Lord Bathurst, to whom he had sent his memorial in favor of the seminary of Montreal. The noble lord, however, had only made a very short visit to Downing street, and of that short visit M. Lartigue had received no notice. As it would have been only lost time to have remained in London, M. Lartigue left for Paris to pass some days with his confrères of Saint Sulpice, but his health became so bad that he was compelled to forego his intended journey to Rome.

In the month of December he returned to London, to press the important business with which he was charged. It had made no progress since the departure of Mgr. Plessis for Rome ; but by some mysterious hand, the project of spoliation seemed to be paralyzed.

The fact was that the able memorial presented by Mgr. Plessis had made its impression upon the minds of the Imperial Ministry, and had induced it

to suspend indefinitely, the execution of a measure which might be attended with such fatal consequences. So satisfied were the sulpicians of the happy effects produced by the memorial of Mgr. Plessis, that the gentlemen of that institution begged him to receive their acknowledgments, which they addressed to him through the medium of M. Roux.

Before leaving London for Rome, the Bishop of Quebec had informed M. Lartigue that he intended to propose him to the Holy See, for the spiritual government of the district of Montreal; that worthy priest showed great repugnance to undertake the charge, and only consented at last, on the express condition, that his appointment should first obtain the approbation of M. Duclaux, Superior General of the Sulpiciens.

M. Duclaux gave his consent, after being assured of that of M. Roux. These two gentlemen, however, understood that the district of Montreal would be detached from the diocese of Quebec; and explained their views formally on that point, M. Lartigue also expected that such was to be the arrangement; he was therefore, much surprised when he learnt, that to avoid giving umbrage to the Court of London, which had expressed its intention of recognizing officially only the Bishop of Quebec, the holy see had nominated the new dignitaries, not diocesan Bishops, but auxiliaries and suffragans of the Archbishop of Quebec.

"You announce to me," wrote M. Lartigue to Mgr. Plessis, "that you are the bearer of two apostolic briefs; the one conferring on me the title of Bishop of a place of which I cannot decipher the name, the other creating me auxiliary, suffragan, and grand vicar of the Bishop or Archbishop of Quebec. You are right in thinking that I should not receive that news with pleasure, for I could only resolve to lend my shoulders to the painful burden of the episcopate, when I could feel certain that that dignity would enable me to be useful to the church. Now permit me to say, with all the frankness required by the

critical situation in which I find myself, that I am persuaded, that if the arrangement spoken of is ever put into practice, it will do more harm than good."

"In the first place, you will lose the finest occasion that you could have for forming your diocese into a regular province of six suffragans, the Bishops of Montreal, of Upper Canada, of Hudson's Bay, of New Brunswick, of Nova Scotia and of Newfoundland, of which your see of Quebec would be the metropolis. That was doubtless your first plan. . . . By the terms of your last letter, I see that this first arrangement is altogether set aside. Still, if by a separation of the district of Montreal from the rest of your diocese, that district had been erected into an apostolic vicariate, as are the divers episcopal districts of England, that would have put it in a fair way of obtaining the title at a more opportune time. . . . The object of your memorial has then absolutely failed, and that is no small inconvenience. Then I am convinced that this new plan will displease the whole district of Montreal, and particularly the seminary, which I am almost sure would not receive me as one of its members, if I presented myself simply as your auxiliary."*

Forseeing so many difficulties M. Lartigue finished by begging that he might not have the burden of the episcopate imposed upon his shoulders.

"If, however," added he in a subsequent letter, "you persist in believing me fit for this heavy burthen, you still have time to expose to the Holy Father, the terror with which the thought of it inspires me, and you may receive an answer before you leave Europe. Then only, when I shall have heard the vicar of Christ on earth address to me the words *Pasce oves meas*, I will not hesitate for a moment to submit to his decision, I will not say, with joy, but with entire resignation."

Persuaded that the objections raised by M. Lartigue were dictated by the delicacy of his conscience,

* Letter of M. Lartigue to Mgr. Fleiss, 24th March, 1820.

Mgr. Plessis did not wish to have recourse to Rome for a new nomination: he knew that nobody was better able than M. Lartigue to fill worthily the charge to which he had been called by the voice of his superiors; he was willing however to allow him to address his representations to the Pope, well assured that they would produce no effect.

There was no hope of obtaining any modification of the first decisions of the British Government: "The British Ministry may change," observed the prelate, "but the spirit of the British Ministry changes not. We need not flatter ourselves with obtaining a new policy towards catholics, until it comes from the King, and we are ignorant at present of the King's way of thinking in relation to catholics..... The court of Rome granted all I asked, but it was not so with the court of England. I obtained my two last suffragans only with great trouble, and only as grand vicars, clothed with the episcopal character. The government did not wish to recognize me as metropolitan, so that my diocese is really not divided as I should have wished, but only divided into districts for Bishops *in partibus*, subject to my authority."

After his return to England, Mgr. Plessis again obtained many audiences of the Secretary of State for the colonies, who sent by him an official letter for Lord Dalhousie, recently named Governor of Canada. Earl Bathurst informed the latter of the arrangements which had been adopted by the Court of Rome, for the advantage of the catholics of Canada, and of the approbation which His Majesty had given to those measures, concerning the division of the diocese of Quebec. And further, that letters patent were to be issued for the College of Nicolet; in short the government seemed to have forgotten the project of seizing the property of the Seminary of Montreal.

The King, himself, testified his good will towards his Canadian subjects. When the Bishop of Quebec was presented to him, George IV received him with a marked benevolence, he spoke to him of the services rendered during the American war by the catholics.

of Canada, and acknowledged the confidence that he had in the loyalty of the people and of the clergy of the province.

If circumstances had prevented the complete attainment of all the wishes of Mgr. Plessis, an ample success had after all crowned his negotiations, and he now hastened homeward, that he might carry into his diocese the good news.

As soon as possible he embarked for America, with his fellow travellers MM. Turgeon et Lartigue and arrived at New York on the 21st July, 1820. At the request of the prefect of the Propaganda, he had undertaken to visit New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore; to enquire into the difficulties raised in many dioceses by schismatic priests, who rejected the authority of the bishops. His subsequent reports to the Court of Rome sustained the claims of Mgr. Marechal, Archbishop of Baltimore, who complained, that in the nomination of new bishops for the United States, the old ones, already *au fait* to the spirit and institutions of the country, were not sufficiently consulted.

On the 7th August, 1820, the travellers arrived at Montreal, where the Bishop of Quebec presented to the priests of the Seminary their old confrere, who was about to undertake the spiritual direction of that district. Mgr. Plessis hoped that would be a new proof to them of the confidence and esteem which he had always accorded to their house.

Nobody doubted that the title of M. Lartigue as a member of the congregation of St. Sulpice, had weighed greatly, in his favor, when he had been chosen as first Pastor of Montreal. In this, his native city, Mgr. Plessis had been trained up by the disciples of M. Olier, and he had ever preserved for his first masters, and for their successors, a profound respect and a sincere affection, and on many occasions he had already given proofs of the confidence that he reposed in them.

His promotion to the Episcopacy had enabled him to come to their aid very efficaciously; while he

was only coadjutor, he had favored powerfully the admission into the Province of many of their confreres, called to share their labors. His support on this particular occasion had been so efficacious, that M. Emery, Superior General of the order of St. Sulpice, believed it his duty at the time, to acknowledge it in the most flattering terms. He wrote to the Prelate, "I have not been allowed to remain in ignorance of the kind sentiments with which you have shown yourself so deeply penetrated for the priests of my congregation, who are laboring in Canada. You have given them great proofs of it, and they are desirous that I should convey to you expressions of their gratitude as well as my own, and I do it in the fulness of my heart. I do not think it necessary to beg, that you will continue to treat them in the same manner, when divine providence shall have called into his bosom, the worthy prelate, whom you are destined to succeed. They will prove to you, by their obedience, their docility, and their zeal to fulfil your wishes, and to execute your orders, that they are not unworthy of it."*

These sentiments of affection and of respect for the Seminary of Montreal, Mgr. Plessis preserved to the last, and he was happy to give a proof of it in the choice that he had made, of a priest of that house, for a charge of the highest importance, who at the same time was a man as remarkable for his virtues, as he was eminent for his talents and his science.

Previous to betaking himself to the capital where he was so impatiently expected, the prelate wished to stop some days at his seminary of Nicolet : a place that he revisited ever with a more than ordinary degree of pleasure. In the midst of a numerous concourse of priests, assembled from all parts of the Province to wish him welcome, the Bishop of Quebec presided over the examination of the pupils ; and received their felicitations, with all the joy that

* Letter of M. Emery, 24th December, 1850.

a kind father exhibits, surrounded by his children after a long separation.

The news of the happy return of the first pastor of the diocese, was soon spread, and every where through the whole route homeward, demonstrations were organized in his honor.

"I will not attempt to paint to you," said M. Raimbault, in his funeral oration over Mgr. Plessis, "that touching scene, of which many of you were witnesses, when leaving Nicolet, (where he had reposed some days in the midst of the simple and innocent fêtes, and the lively joy of the young Students of the College he had founded,) he put his foot on the soil of Three-Rivers. Recall to yourselves, that numerous and honorable deputation, displaying the sacred oriflamme upon the waters of the proud Saint Lawrence. I think I hear the redoubled acclamations, mingled with the cries of joy, with which the Citizens made the air resound. With what pleasure he received, and gave back their salutes! With what touching abandon every one felicitated his neighbour on the return of his Bishop, after such a long absence! But that was only the opening of the triumph they had prepared for him in the capital; and of which every one has read, or heard the description. A second floating deputation ascended the river, as though they would accuse the one that had preceded them of being too tardy; an impatient population coursed through the streets of the city, spreading itself over the quays, every vessel in the harbor decked with flags, the most respectable Citizens rivalled each other, in their ardor and their joy.... What acclamations! what excitement! what touching demonstrations of love and pleasure!"

In this vigorous description, traced by the panegyrist of the great Bishop, there is nothing exaggerated. At this day it is scarcely possible to figure to oneself, the emotion caused in Quebec by the announcement of the near arrival of Mgr. Plessis. During forty years he had dwelt in the Capital, which he had scarcely ever left, except for very short intervals. As Curé, he

had formed the generation then at the head of all its affairs. For twenty years he had been the chief representative of ecclesiastical authority, and the most distinguished citizen of Canada. The inhabitants of British origin, respected and esteemed him, in consequence of his eminent qualities of all kinds; his prolonged absence had left among the Catholics a void which afflicted all ranks of society. So that the announcement of his approach to his metropolitan city, diffused a general joy. The principal citizens hired a Steamboat to go out to meet him. That boat, then regarded as the Queen of the Saint Lawrence, was called the *Car of Commerce*. Loaded with hundreds of passengers, among whom were distinguished members of the Legislature, of the Clergy and of the Bar, she reached Three-Rivers, just at the same moment, when the Bishop and his companions arrived there from Nicolet. Lively acclamations welcomed him, he was surprised to find himself, all at once surrounded by his friends from Quebec.

Early in the morning of the next day, the 16th August, the steamboat resumed her triumphal progress towards Quebec. Numerous groups succeeded each other around the Bishop, anxious to see and hear him. An unusual bustle on both shores of the St. Lawrence, testified that the inhabitants were taking part in the general joy; each little village as he passed, saluted him with lively fusillades and these again were replied to by the boat's cannon. Between the two cities, another steamboat joined the procession, all decorated with flags, and bringing a second deputation from the capital.

The eagerness of the people of Quebec to see their first pastor again, and to welcome him home with honor, surpassed every manifestation of the kind that had ever been seen in the country.

Shortly after mid-day, the quays, the balconies, the roofs were all covered with spectators; many went off to the ships in the harbor, whose yards were manned by sailors. When the cannon announced the approach of the two steamboats, great cries of joy

resounded from all parts ; mixed with the fanfares of the military music of the 60th Regiment, and the merry peals of the bells in the city. On his disembarkation the crowd pressed forward, eager to receive the blessing of their Bishop ; and so large a number followed to assist at the *Te Deum*, that in spite of its vast proportions, the cathedral could only contain a part of them.

Numerous addresses were presented to him, and on all hands he received testimonies of the lively satisfaction caused by the return of the shepherd to his fold.

V

Anxieties caused by the new divisions of the Diocese—M. Lartigue's hesitations—Decision of the Court of Rome—Consecration of Mgrs. Lartigue, MacDonell, McEachern, Provencher—Mgr. Lartigue retires to the Hôtel-Dieu of Montreal—Mandement of Mgr. Plessis—*Quebec Gazette*—Difficulties raised by Mgr. Lartigue.

Great curiosity and deep interest were now felt, both among the clergy and the laity regarding the changes which were about to be introduced into the administration of the diocese of Quebec by order of the Court of Rome. *

Part of the arrangements only were known ; but on many points, the division of the holy see remained still enveloped in a certain mystery ; and this circumstance inspired many of the ecclesiastics with anxieties. In order to tranquilize their minds, Mgr. Plessis took occasion, at a reunion held shortly after his arrival, for the celebration of the fête du sacerdoce ; to announce to his clergy the measures that had been adopted by the sovereign pontiff for the advantage of the church of Canada.

He informed his priests that the very fête for which they had then assembled, and which they had been accustomed to celebrate annually, that of the sacer-

* Lower Canada then contained 337,119 catholics, of which there were 109,000 in the district of Quebec, 39,000 in the district of Three-Rivers and 159,119 in that of Montreal.

doce, must henceforth cease ; being found contrary to the rules of the roman liturgy.

In his allocution, the prelate showed the priest the measures adopted by the Courts of Rome and London touching the arrangements made for the organization of ecclesiastical authority.

It had been conjectured that the consecration of the Bishops, would have immediately followed that communication, but many circumstances led to its being long deferred.

MM. MacDonell and McEachern were far away ; M. Provencher had gone to his mission, and declared himself not yet ready ; M. Lartigue waited for a formal order from the holy see ; and objected to being consecrated before the final decision of the sovereign pontiff had been signified to him. He was besides frightened at the difficulties which he fancied he saw looming in the future ; he had been warned that as a Bishop, he could no longer reside at the seminary of St. Sulpice, and he saw himself thus cut off from the counsels of his confreres.

On the first of September 1820, he writes to the Bishop. " They have notified me yesterday that my sojourn in the seminary, with the episcopal character is not possible.....I regard that incident, as one of the strongest indications, that providence has not destined me for the post that you desire to confide to me ; and I take this occasion, to make a new effort to supplicate you, not to load me with a burden too heavy for my weak shoulders."

After having enumerated and exaggerated his spiritual miseries—he adds :

" I think that in weighing before God, these and many other reasons, joined to the delay which has followed the request that you have made to the Court of Rome, for an order to oblige me to accept, and of which I am firmly resolved to await the issue before deciding ; you will see in all these unequivocal signs of divine providence, that one more worthy than myself is reserved as the pastor of that part of your diocese ; these reason will also facilitate your request,

for a subject more worthy of governing that district, instead of a man, designed only to live in a seminary, and whose sole desire is to die there in peace. I am too well convinced of your deference towards the holy see, not to believe, that before proceeding further in this matter, you will, like myself, wait with patience its judgment upon an affair that you have yourself submitted to its decision."

The final decision of the Sovereign Pontiff, arrived at Quebec in the month of October, and was immediately communicated to M. Lartigue, who, in a letter of the 30th October, 1820, expressed to the Bishop of Quebec his sentiments of obedience :

"My first act after having read in the letter of Cardinal Fontana, the positive order of the Holy Father—in *virtute sanctæ obedientiæ*—to accept my promotion to the episcopate, has been to throw myself on my knees, and to acquiesce heartily in the will of God, which has thus appeared to me to have been as evidently manifested by that of his vicar, as if Jesus Christ had spoken to me in person. I have not then hesitated an instant to submit myself..... groaning I have accepted the burden, however incapable I felt of bearing it."

After his definitive acceptance, M. Lartigue felt it to be his duty to occupy himself with projects for the future. He proposed to go and live in a country parish on the south shore of the St. Lawrence. "That arrangement," he wrote, "will produce no change in the usages of the seminary, and I shall be able to govern my district from a country parish, with fewer hindrances than I should be likely to meet with in the city. If God spares my life, I shall not despair of being one day able to establish my residence in Montreal, when certain prejudices shall be effaced... but the time has not yet come.... Not only our gentlemen (*sulpiciens*) desire that I be consecrated at Montreal, but further, they wish that if that ceremony is to take place in the course of the winter, I should remain with them until the spring."

Mr. Alexander McDonell, nominated Bishop of Rhésine, was consecrated at Quebec on the last day of the year, 1820. Many circumstances delayed the consecration of M. Lartigue, which did not take place till the 21st January, 1821. Mgr. Plessis wished to perform that solemn ceremony in the parish church of Montreal. In his funeral oration over M. Lartigue, M. La Rocque said :

“The 21st January takes its place among the epochs which belong to the history of religion in this country. On that ever memorable day, M. Lartigue was charged with the administration of the district of Montreal, laying the basis of an Episcopal See in this city, from which it has drawn, and does draw daily so many precious advantages.”

The parish church of Montreal was particularly appropriate to this ceremony, since besides the advantage of being the oldest and most remarkable church in the diocese, it had a peculiar title to the respect of the two prelates. There in fact the consecrator and the consecrated had received the sacrament of baptism, and made their first communion—there they were taught their first lessons of christian doctrine, and as a prelude to the august functions of the priesthood and the episcopacy, they had begun by joining in the ceremonies as simple children of the choir.

Mr. Bernard Angus MacEachern, nominated Bishop of Rose, was consecrated at Quebec on the seventeenth day of June following. He was a venerable scotch missionary, and an old friend of Mgr. MacDonell. For many years he had visited the scotch and acadian settlements in Prince Edward's Island, rarely reposing from his apostolic labors. The presence of the good Bishop became so much more necessary in these missions, in consequence of the death of Mgr. Burke, Bishop of Sion, who on the twenty-ninth November preceding, had left his nephew Mr. Carroll in charge of the administration of the diocese ; but the young priest felt embarrassed with the burden, as he saw no hopes of being relieved for

a long period. Mr. Maguire, curé of St. Michel, who had been demanded by Mgr. Burke for his coadjutor, refused firmly to accept the charge; it therefore became necessary to wait till another choice had been made at Rome. In the then state of the church of Nova Scotia, it was a difficult task to find a successor to Mgr. Burke.

As to the consecration of M. Provencher, named meanwhile curé of Machiche, it was deferred till the twelfth May 1822, in order that the new Bishop should have time to prepare himself for a charge, which would be surrounded with numerous difficulties in his distant and wild district.

Mgr. Lartigue understood that the circumstances in which his new position placed him, did not permit him to remain at the seminary. He accepted therefore, while waiting for better times, the kind invitation of the ladies of the Hôtel-Dieu, who placed at his disposal some apartments ordinarily reserved for sick priests. His residence there was of a longer duration than he had at first expected, for he had renounced his project of withdrawing to the country, convinced that his presence at Montreal would be attended with greater advantages to his episcopal district.

After his return to Quebec, Mgr. Plessis officially informed the faithful of the district of Montreal, that Mgr. Lartigue was going to exercise among them the functions of a suffragan and auxiliary bishop.

In his *mandement* of February, 1821, he thus alluded to the subject: "On the twenty-first of last month, we gave episcopal consecration to Mgr. Jean Jacques Lartigue, Titular of Telmesse. It would have been more flattering to us, to have consecrated him under a title which would have expressed more directly the relations that you will henceforth have with him. That has neither depended upon us, nor upon the Holy See; which has gone as far as the circumstances of the moment permitted in calling him by a brief.... to the spiritual government of the city and district of Montreal, in quality of our

auxiliary, suffragan and vicar general. We conform ourselves then, to the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff, in signifying to you by the present *mandement*, that you are in future to render to Monseigneur the Bishop of Telmesse, in all the churches of the district of Montreal, the same honors that you would render to ourselves, if we were in those places; and consider him there, as specially and generally charged with the episcopal functions. It is thus our positive intention, that you have recourse henceforth to him, in every case where formerly you would have had recourse to us, except in referring those matters that he should esteem himself unable to terminate without our aid."*

The intention of Mgr. Plessis was to avoid as much as possible compromising the British ministry, while leaving the greatest possible latitude to the Bishop of Telmesse in the exercise of his pastoral functions. But in spite of all his prudence, the indiscretion of a journalist, greatly embarrassed the relations between Lord Bathurst and Mgr. Plessis. If the minister had often given earnest of his good will towards the bishop, his kind intentions faded sometimes, before his fears of being attacked upon the subject in Parliament. Great then were his anxieties when he read the following announcement in a Montreal journal: "The Archbishop of Quebec has consecrated Dr. Lartigue, and installed him Bishop of Montreal;" here was an instrument of attack upon the ministry ready made for the hands of the opposition. Lord Bathurst immediately addressed a dispatch to the Governor General of Canada, expressing his surprise at the appearance of such a paragraph in the public papers, and requesting explanations as to its correctness. A similar communication was sent to the Bishop of Quebec through Dr. Poynter.

"I have seen Mr. Goulburn this morning," wrote the prelate, "he tells me that Lord Bathurst was

Mandement 30th Feb., 1821.

much puzzled at the appearance of an article which had appeared in the *Gazette* of Quebec, and which was calculated to cause him much embarrassment. Lord Bathurst observed that it was quite contrary to the arrangement concluded between him and your Lordship. I replied that there was evidently some mistake in the report....; that you had not taken the title of Archbishop, but only that of Bishop of Quebec; that Mgr. Lartigue had not been consecrated Bishop of Montreal, but as Bishop of Telmesse; that he was your Grand Vicar, with the Episcopal character, for the district of Montreal, and that was precisely as you agreed with his Lordship. Mr. Goulburn appeared satisfied, and informed me that he would explain the affair to Lord Bathurst.*

Mgr. Plessis hastened to give Dr. Poynter the following explanations to calm the anxieties of the Secretary of State.

"I have received no letter from Lord Bathurst, but he has written to our Governor General, Lord Dalhousie, who has transmitted the paragraph in question to me, begging me to let him know all about it, for the information of the Secretary of State. My reply was in perfect accordance with that which you gave to Mr. Goulburn, and could not be different. Nobody has been louder than myself in praise of the proceedings of Lord Bathurst, and independently of that, which my position demands of me in relation to his Majesty,.... if I was capable of using duplicity, gratitude would prevent my exercising it towards Lord Bathurst, and thereby exposing him to uneasiness. Without being much advanced in politics, I can conceive all the delicacy of the position of a Secretary of State, and to what trials he must be subjected. You will give me much pleasure, if you will take occasion to communicate this to Lord Bathurst."

The letter of the Bishop of Quebec, and the explanations of the Earl of Dalhousie, appeared satisfactory; and Dr. Poynter announced shortly after, that the

* Letter from Mgr. Poynter, 7th April, 1821.

affair had lost all the importance with which it had been clothed by the extreme circumspection of the Ministry.

"I have presented your reply to Lord Bathurst and to Mr. Goulburn, who have both read it, and were convinced that the article in the *Gazette* was incorrect, and that the conduct of your Lordship was worthy of approbation.*

But if the proceedings of Mgr. Plessis deserved commendation, those of Lord Bathurst seemed slow and timid; a year had elapsed since he had agreed to inform the Governor of Canada of the promises made on the subject of the Seminary of Nicolet, and of the arrangements concluded in relation to the new Bishops, and still no despatch had come to Lord Dalhousie. The Bishop therefore felt himself bound to offer to the Governor General the following explanation upon the state of things.

...."In consequence of a memorial which I had the honor of submitting to the consideration of Lord Bathurst in 1819, his Lordship had the kindness to signify to me, by a despatch of the same day, that His Majesty's Government admitted my ulterior plan, in such a sense, that they did not disapprove that MM Lartigue and Provencher should be clothed under my dependence, with such ecclesiastical authority as I should judge necessary. As the assistance that I expected from them required that they should be clothed with the Episcopal character, for confirmation and for conferring orders, I obtained also from the Holy See in 1820, some Bishoprics *in partibus*, after having given the British Ministry notice of my application for them. At the end of 1818, the Holy See judged it proper to erect my church into an Archbishopric. I was informed of it only in the month of August, 1819, after my arrival at London, and I gave notice of it myself to Lord Bathurst; but perceiving that this new order of things was not agreeable to Lord Bath-

* Letter of Mgr. Foynter, 31st August, 1821.

urst, and to the English Cabinet, I abstained from taking advantage of it."....

But I cannot hold myself responsible for the fantasy, that led a *gazetteer* to endow me with the title of Archbishop."

The instructions touching the position of the new Bishops were at last communicated with great reserve to Lord Dalhousie, by the Secretary of the Colonies, who was always afraid of compromising himself. As to the letters patent in favor of the Seminary of Nicolet, they were accorded in the month of February 1821, to the great satisfaction of Mgr. Plessis and his friends.

Shortly after the publication of the *mandement* of February 1821, some troubles more serious than those caused by the paragraph of the Canadian journalist, began to agitate men's minds in the City of Montreal, and in a part of the District of the same name; the disputes which followed filled the last years of the Bishop of Quebec with bitterness. The difficulties that had been apprehended as likely to grow out of the doubtful position of the Bishop of Telmesse, appeared immediately in all their extent; the church-wardens of the parish of Montreal thought proper to regulate the honors that they should accord to Mgr. Lartigue, and to decide whether they would put at his disposal the Episcopal Throne or not. Many persons who were not interested in the question, mixed themselves up with the discussion; they attacked the *mandement* of the Bishop of Quebec, who, according to certain writers could not transmit to others the honors belonging to himself. For two or three years the Montreal journals were full of correspondence, in which the Ecclesiastical authorities were not always spared.

Mgr. Plessis was profoundly grieved, with the opposition raised against the measures that he had taken for the glory of God, and for the greatest good of his flock; and that he had adopted only, after advising with the wisest members of his clergy.

At the same time full of confidence in the justice of his cause, and in the protection of providence, he held the firm hope, that time and reflexion would re-establish calm, and that the storm would exhaust itself with its own violence. All his counsels were dictated by moderation and patience, the same means by which he had succeeded in his struggles against the Provincial Government.

To Mgr. Lartigue, who asked to be treated like another Jonas, and thrown into the sea, to appease the tempest, he replied :—" They have sent me a long memorial to prove by demonstrative reason, that all the honors that I abandon to you, and which you receive, are abuses. I will not contest with the author of such a memoir ; but I will send to Rome my *mandement* of the 20th February and submit it to the judgment of the Holy See. Do not dispute with them the absence of a throne, content yourself with a *prie-dieu* ; if that is not to be had, seat yourself on the end of a bench, or what would be still better, cease to assist in a parish church which is no more a cathedral than any other church in the city, and adopt the church of the Hotel-Dieu or any other."

" Foolish speeches are for those who make them ; you would be wrong to vex yourself with these wicked disputes, though directed against you. Continue to act with charity and compassion. This conduct will be more agreeable to God and edifying to the church. In every kind of debate, happy he who knows how to place moderation on his side."

With respect to the ebullition that had followed the division of his diocese, some one told him that he was reproached by many with not having consulted others sufficiently ; he replied to the friend who gave him that information : " When we wish to do right, we should not repel the advice of those who wish to do right also. But my experience has shown me that some men, otherwise the friends of right, are very unreasonable in those matters where their own personal interest is concerned. That consideration has often prevented me from consulting them. Never-

theless, I have done it a great many times. You would be astonished if I were to give you a list of my consultations; still more, if I was to add to that, a list of the replies that have been sent to me. But as I also may be blind where my own self love is concerned, I esteem myself fortunate in having in you a monitor who may be able to dissipate my illusions."

VI

Charity of Mgr. Plessis towards the Irish emigrants—School law of 1801—Letter of an old curé—Fruitless attempts to obtain a more equitable school law—Letters to Mgr. Poynter and to the Colonial Secretary—Reply to Lord Bathurst—The question of subsidies—Second visit to the District of Gaspé—Continued disputes in the District of Montreal—Mandement—Abolition of the *fête du sacerdoce*.

In the midst of all his solicitude for the unhappy state of affairs in the Montreal district, he never forgot the interests of that part of the diocese reserved to himself, nor indeed those of Lower Canada in general.

During the summer of 1820, some Irish families had arrived in Quebec in the hope of ameliorating their condition; they failed, however, in meeting those advantages they had expected, and as the rigorous season approached, they found themselves exposed to great misery. The charitable heart of the Prelate was touched with their sad condition; he made efforts to place some in the country, that he might assist more efficaciously those who remained in the city.

"Are there no means," wrote he, to each of the curés, "of placing in your parish a single Irish family? These poor persons perish with cold and hunger in the streets. They cannot find any thing to eat in cities, without money in hand, and they have no money. There is more charity in your country parishes than among our citizens, and really more resources. Many private persons might unite to nourish and clothe that family from this to the spring. They are catholics, our brothers, strangers in this

country. Should every parish in the district charge itself with one, there would still remain enough to starve in the city. Finally we must not forget the words of Our Saviour : *Hospes eram et collegistis me.*"

Thanks to the intervention of the Prelate, means were found to place thirty of those poor families in the Country, who were fed and lodged during the winter ; so that those who remained in the city were more easily relieved.

A very important question now occupied the true friends of the country, who were desirous of spreading primary instruction among the people, and above all in the country, for the cities were provided with schools. But there were many obstacles in the way of accomplishing that most desirable work. The first and most serious, was the unfortunate law of 1801, which had confided the superintendence of the schools to the Royal Institution. Now the Provincial Government had found the means of giving the direction of that society to the Protestant Clergy, and to the members of the Coterie, who had always worked to destroy Catholic Institutions. The money raised from the people was placed in their hands and expended according to their directions. It was therefore not surprising that the Catholic Bishop of Quebec and his clergy, were constantly and energetically opposed to that unjust law, which had been introduced at the close of a session when there remained but a few Canadian Members in the House of Assembly.

An old curé of Cap-Santé, a judicious and well informed man, has given some interesting details upon the working of that law, and added the following reflexions in a memorial that he left upon his parish.

"That law was far from receiving a favorable welcome from those Canadians who where enlightened, and attached to their religion. The spirit and the motives which had inspired it, and the results which were to flow from the system were too palpable, to impose upon clear sighted people."

“ The members of the Provincial Parliament made many attempts to repeal or modify those parts, which it was plain could only produce the worst effects ; but all was useless : the enemies of the Canadians had gained too much by that act, which they had only secured by surprise, to cede any portion of what they had thus obtained....”

“ Nobody remains ignorant of the formal and constant opposition, that the catholic clergy always exhibited, and with reason, against the establishment of these schools ; submitted to the direction, and under the immediate and sole influence of the protestant clergy. The manner in which the Bill establishing these schools had been obtained, the well known views of the propounders of that measure ; the formal exclusion from all influence, direct, or even indirect, on the part of the catholic clergy over these schools ; the predilection for choosing none but protestant teachers for them, while all the pupils belonged to the catholic religion, were reasons surely sufficient to justify, and even command that opposition, which the catholic clergy ever displayed against their establishment.”

In 1820, a new school Bill, equitable alike for catholics and protestants, was admitted into both houses of the Lower Canadian legislature ; and reserved for royal sanction by the Administrator of the Province. Mgr. Plessis, who was then in England, took some steps to induce the English ministry to recommend that measure to His Majesty, but his efforts were vain, for they imagined at the colonial office, that the provisions of that Bill were all in favor of catholics and intended to deprive the royal institution of its acquired rights.

In writing to his coadjutor upon this subject, he begged him to apply to Messrs. Papineau and Taschereau to induce them to modify certain clauses, so as to convince the ministry that the law was as favorable to protestants as to catholics.

The bill was accordingly amended, in such a way as to avoid wounding the susceptibilities of any party,

and again passed through both houses in the year 1821, and Lord Dalhousie felt it to be his duty to recommend it to the good-will of his sovereign. The true friends of the country, hoped that the imperial government would permit the Canadians to organize a system of schools, calculated to insure public instruction, without delivering them over to the mercy of men opposed to their creed, their language, and their institutions. On that occasion, as on all others, where the important interests of his compatriots were concerned, Mgr. Plessis raised his voice in favor of the justice of their cause.

He wrote to Mgr. Poynter, who he knew was often admitted to the Colonial office, and whose opinions were much respected there, to inform him of the state of things.

"Our Provincial Parliament having passed an Act extremely desired by the Catholics of this country, for the establishment of schools in country parishes, the Governor has sent it home for the Royal sanction, and that is of course a source of grief to many. I had taken the resolution of writing upon this subject to Lord Bathurst, but I abstained from it, upon the assurance given to me by Earl Dalhousie, that in transmitting the Bill he had strongly recommended it.*

A month after, fearing evidently that the recommendations of Earl Dalhousie had not been sufficiently pressing, he wrote the following letter to the Secretary of the Colonies :

"The two Houses of the Provincial Parliament, have passed in their last Session a Bill for the encouragement of education in the country parishes; and His Excellency, Earl Dalhousie, judged it proper to reserve it for the sanction of the King. I should believe myself wanting, my Lord, in that which I owe to my position, and to my country; if I did not acquaint your Lordship, how ardently the Catholic subjects of this province desire, that it would please His Majesty to sanction that Bill. For though it is framed

* Letter to Dr. Poynter, March, 1821.

in such a manner as to accommodate all religious persuasions, it nevertheless interests more especially the Catholics, who have not hitherto had any encouragement for their country schools, because that which was established in virtue of another Act, to wit: the Act of the 41st year of the reign of his deceased Majesty, did not accord with their principles; and was not in any way suitable to them. The delay of the Governor General to sanction it, has sufficed to alarm the people. In different parts of the province they have already prepared petitions to the King, and I can only re-assure their minds, by repeating to them the answer which I have had the honor of receiving from the Earl of Dalhousie, that he flattered himself with soon seeing the Bill return from England. Should it be otherwise, a great majority of the people would be in great consternation.....

The object in question is in my humble opinion of such importance, that if a uniformly loyal conduct can merit any esteem on the part of your Lordship, I have dared to take the liberty of supplicating that you would be pleased to remember it, on an occasion which touches so nearly the people confided to my pastoral solicitude.”*

But in spite of the urgent appeal of the Bishop, and the recommendations of the Governor General, the wishes of the Canadian Parliament were not entertained.

Lord Bathurst addressed the Bishop of Quebec in French, giving his reasons for it.†

“I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the letter which you addressed to me on the 28th of April, in which you acquaint me with the desires of the catholic subjects of His Majesty, that a Bill which has passed both houses of the Provincial Parliament, for the encouragement of education in the country parishes, be sanctioned by His Majesty.”

“I assure you, Mgr. that it will always give me pleasure to make known to His Majesty your sen-

* Letter to Lord Bathurst, 28th April, 1821.

† Letter of Lord Bathurst to Mgr., the Roman Catholic Bishop of Quebec.

timents upon every thing connected with the welfare of those confided to your pastoral care ; and if I do not find myself at present in a condition to announce to you that the Bill in question has received His Majesty's sanction ; it is only because, that with every disposition to give the catholics some means of education, which they think more satisfactory than those which they enjoy to day, His Majesty believes it necessary to the general interests of the colony, to defer the consideration of that Bill, till the Legislators shall have decided upon some other measures, which have been a long time under discussion ; and which the Governor General has received orders to submit again to their consideration in the next session.

"I have the honor to be, Monseigneur, &c., &c."

The measures, to which the Colonial Secretary made allusion, related to the question of subsidies. In the name of His Majesty, the Governor General had demanded, that the Civil List be voted for the duration of the King's life, according to the practice in England. The House of Assembly refused to adopt that plan, but offered to make annual appropriations for the Civil List, in consequence of the frequent fluctuations of the amount of annual revenue in the Province.

They were annoyed at the Colonial Office by that refusal, and sought to coerce the representatives, by refusing their sanction to laws, advantageous to the whole catholic population. From year to year the hopes of the friends of public instruction were deceived ; a miserable coterie, opposed to the institutions, the religion and language of the people, held in spite of them, the direction of a society which had, at its disposal, the money raised from catholics ; and which they used against catholicism. It was only in 1824 that they could obtain a measure allowing the vestries for *the Trustees of the ecclesiastical and school revenues* in the country parishes, the right of possessing lands and houses for the establishment of parish schools. At a later period the rights of justice triumphed, common schools were founded, and the royal institution

disappeared; without having produced the results which its partizans had expected from it.

In 1821 the Bishop visited the district of Gaspé, for the second time; there were as yet no roads to connect the small establishments scattered along the shores of the St. Lawrence and the Bay of Chaleur.

He was harassed and fatigued by a journey, so trying to a man of his years; on his return to Quebec, he found a mass of accumulated business, which no body could put in order but himself. Numerous written consultations on the part of Mgr. de Telmesse and many *cures* of the district of Montreal awaited him at his office, as well as letters from priests belonging to the Districts of Quebec and Three Rivers. Some of them requiring long and tedious researches, only to be made by prodigious labor, others by their number and often by their insignificance embarrassed his work; like the clouds of flies which annoy the traveller without doing him any other harm than by delaying him longer than more serious obstacles would have otherwise done. But his great assiduity and faculty of unravelling complicated business soon mastered these arrears and in one week left him free to attend to his ordinary correspondence.

The difficult question touching the ecclesiastical government of Montreal was still in agitation; he desired much to cede that district completely to Mgr. Lartigue, and to induce the British Government to recognize him as vicar apostolic and titular Bishop. He wrote to Dr. Poynter begging him to ascertain whether the disposition of the Ministry in England, had undergone any change upon that subject. "I find," replied Mgr. d'Halie, that Mgr. Lartigue concerns himself much about his title *in partibus infidelium*, and believes that things would work better, if he bore the title of Bishop of Montreal. But Lord Bathurst is so opposed to it, that if I spoke to him now upon that business, I should do more harm than good. M. Goulburn informed me lately that the opposition of Lord Bathurst did not proceed so much from

his own ideas, as from the disposition of some of those, with whom he is connected."

At the same time Mgr. Plessis addressed to the Bishop of Telmesse, some advice and consolation calculated to sustain and encourage him in the midst of the howling tempest.

"We should know how to remain calm," said he to him, "in the midst of a storm that will have but one time *cum his qui oderunt pacem eram pacificus*. After all, those men all esteem you, only they find your bark a little rough. Many complain that you are sharp and exacting, and that you do not know how to humour your people sufficiently. For myself, I am convinced to the contrary, and I am persuaded that you will gain them all over by showing a little more deference."

Through motives of prudence, or turned aside by pressing occupations, Mgr. Plessis had not as yet published any details of the precise objects or results of his journey to Europe. In his *mandement* of the 5th December, 1822, he undertook to do this, he hoped that an *exposé*, clear and explanatory of all his proceedings to obtain the division of his diocese, would perhaps bring together again those minds that had been led astray by false representations. After having dwelt upon the principal objects of his voyage, he made allusion to the difficulties raised around Mgr. Telmesse, in his episcopal district.

"We have not learnt," said he, "without great affliction, that in a certain district the jurisdiction of one of these worthy bishops has been contested; but we dare flatter ourselves, that after the simple *exposé* of our proceedings, and the dispositions of the Holy See, that more judicious reflexions will effect a reconciliation, uniting the hearts and filling up our wishes for the edification of the church, the union of its members, and their perfect submission to the views of the Sovereign Pontiff....."

This *mandement* did not arrest the agitation, which was still great; but it had the effect of enlightening those minds which were not prejudiced, and waited

these explanations, in order to decide upon which party they would follow.

In closing the instructions which he addressed in that document to the clergy, and to the faithful of the districts of Montreal, of Three Rivers, and of Quebec ; the prelate announced the establishment of certain *fêtes*, accorded to the diocese ; and he declared at the same time that the *fête du sacerdoce*, celebrated in the country since the year 1777, would cease in future, and that the ecclesiastics of the diocese would no longer be permitted to recite the service for it.*

VII

Intrigues for uniting Upper and Lower Canada—Letter to Sir John Sherbrooke—Protest of Canadians—Messrs. Papineau and Neilson deputed to England—Felicitations and advice of Mgr. Plessis to M. Papineau—Success of the Canadians—Patriotism of Mgr. Plessis—Absence of Mgr. McDonnell—Infirmities—M. Doucet—Thought of death—Sickness and death—General consternation—Funeral—Praises and regrets of the Sovereign Pontiff and Cardinals, of Mgr. Poynter, of Lord Dalhousie.

Towards the close of the summer of 1822, everybody was astonished to learn, that in the english House of Commons, a bill of very grave import to Canada, had been discussed at great length ; and had only been withdrawn at the entreaties of the friends of the country : the Legislative Union of Upper and Lower Canada, based upon the gradual extinction of french institutions, had been proposed.

The bill had been presented with the sanction of the Imperial Government, by Mr. Wilmot, who wished it to be adopted before the parties interested had any knowledge of it. "I entreat you," he said, "to adopt this measure upon the spot, for if you wait for another year, so many petitions will be addressed to you against it, that it will be difficult to make it succeed, notwithstanding the advantages it will present to those who will reject it through ignorance or prejudice." With the union of Upper and Lower Canada, the authors of the bill had slipped in their favorite mea-

* This *fête* was held on the first Tuesday after the 29th August ; it was celebrated for the last time at Quebec, in the year 1822.

asures ; the abolition of the french language, the subjection of the catholic church, the destruction of the ancient jurisprudence of the country, the most odious injustice towards the French Canadians in the number of electoral Colleges. A retired merchant who had still some commercial connections with Canada, was the first to give the alarm, as to the iniquity of the measure. Many Members of the House of Commons, among whom were Sir James McIntosh, and others, protested loudly against a law which was designed to overthrow the institutions of a people, without consulting them, without even informing them of it. Mr Lymburner, then resident in England, and who in 1791 had been in favor of the Union, also declared himself against the introduction of the measure ; because since that epoch, numerous and great interests had arisen, based upon the separation of the Provinces. Moved by a tardy sense of justice, the Government were obliged to withdraw the bill for the time, with the exception of some clauses relating to the tenure of lands in Lower Canada, and the regulation of trade and Finance.

From all parts of Lower Canada there arose a unanimous concert of reprobation, against a measure clearly elaborated for the purpose of subjecting Lower Canada to the tyranny of her old enemies.

Firmly persuaded that the first movers of that project lived in this Province, and meditated the annihilation of the catholic religion, and the enslaving of the Canadians ; Mgr. Plessis hastened to have recourse to his friends in England. He addressed Mgr. Poynter, Mr. Lymburner and some others ; and as he knew Sir John Sherbrooke was sincerely attached to the prosperity of the country, he wrote him the following letter :

“ The breach that separated our two chambers has been widened rather than closed . . . In general, things have gone wrong since your departure ; and this circumstance justifies the very sincere grief, which I experienced in seeing you leave this Province, before having had time to consolidate the good that your

presence had operated. The remedy which was suggested last spring in the English House of Commons, will assuredly do more harm than good.

To reunite the two provinces in one Parliament, to attack the religion of the country, to take measures for setting aside the language of a very great majority of the inhabitants of the province, are measures which one would suppose the members of the Imperial Parliament would never trouble themselves about ; if they had not been suggested from here, by some of the persons you know, and who, by the help of the new order of things, would like to concentrate anew the authority in their own hands ; and remove from the management of public affairs the persons most interested in the general welfare of the country. The mass of the Canadians have united to petition the King and the Imperial Parliament, that no change be made in the constitution, as it has existed since 1791. As to the reunion of men's minds, that will easily take place under every Governor, who to other excellent qualities, know how to add that of distrusting the persons who beset him, and would listen to the complaints of the people. It was by such means, that you were enabled to establish peace between those persons who were as opposed, one to the other, as they are at this present time.

The Bishop of Quebec thought also of appealing to the justice and prudence of Lord Bathurst ; but after having seriously reflected upon it, he believed it better to await the success of the addresses which were being prepared in all the parishes of Lower Canada, and the result of the representations that would be made by the deputies sent to England.

Messrs. Papineau and Neilson were chosen as the envoys of the province, to present to the King and to the two Houses of the Imperial Parliament, the petition against the union ; bearing nearly sixty thousand signatures. The Canadians from all parts, hastened to protest against the yoke that was to be imposed upon them, for the profit of the inhabitants of the upper province.

Mgr. Plessis was at this time confined with sickness to the General Hospital, but in spite of the orders of his physician he could not refrain from addressing a letter to M. Papineau, giving him valuable instructions.

"We cannot," he wrote to that eminent patriot, "praise too much your devotion to your country. It is so much the more meritorious, that you have to make head against obstinate and powerful enemies, who seek to close every avenue against you, and who have the secret of amalgamating their interests with those of the government. I dare not flatter myself that you will gain access to the ministry. I have written to Sir John Sherbrooke, to Mr. Adam Lymburner and to Doctor Poynter, the catholic Bishop of London, to whom I have transmitted a copy of the Union Bill as projected last summer by the Imperial Government..... Mr. Adam Lymburner who lives at London, may give you very good counsel. He is a true friend of this country, where he passed a part of his life; and you know that he was deputed by the province to obtain the Statute of 1791.

...."You must expect that most of these Gentlemen will blame the house of Assembly of Lower Canada, for having refused at its last session, the civil list as demanded in the name of the King by Lord Dalhousie. I doubt not that such a refusal has been the cause of bringing in this Union Bill, of which you may believe that all the clauses came from here."*

For the honor and advantage of England, the ministers decided to repel the tyrannical projects of the friends of the Union, the moment they were enlightened upon the true sentiments of the Canadian people.

The deputation was completely successful: Messrs. Papineau and Neilson, having been informed by the Secretary of the Colonies, that the Government had no intention of submitting to Parliament a measure for the union of the Provinces, had not even to present

* Letter to M. Papineau, 4th January, 1823.

the petitions which had been confided to them; they were further told, that if the question was again brought upon the *tapis*, they would give the Canadians notice of it, that they might defend their cause before the British Parliament.

To avert the danger that Lower Canada incurred by that attack, concerted with machiavellian cunning by its common enemies, Mgr. Plessis exerted all his energies with the clergy and the people, to increase the signatures to the petition against the Union. He had been a long time accustomed to meet the fanatical attacks made against the civil and religious liberty of his compatriots. He could always indicate the men in power, who plotted in secret to oppress the Canadians, and as in the first years of his episcopacy, he was still ready to defend his country against the attempts made to enslave it.

While the storm raged without, and threatened all the Canadian population, the little internal war continued at Montreal. Two brochures were published against the rights of Mgr. Telmesse; two others appeared to defend the authority of the Bishops; some writers announced their intention of continuing the struggle. Mgr. Plessis was of opinion that a longer discussion would become useless; that it would scandalize the faithful and rejoice the protestants, without resulting in any advantage to religion. Both parties had already exhausted all their stock of argument and there was nothing left to do, but to repeat them or descend to personalities. By his energetic measures with some, and his prudence with others, he succeeded in quelling this war of brochures; though the public journals which were not under his control, continued to debate the question, but upon ground far removed from that upon which it had been first placed.

The Bishop of Quebec had submitted his *mandement* to the Holy See, and waited with patience the decision of Rome, which was delayed by the death of Pius VII., and was afterwards deferred from year to year. He had the consolation, however, before

his death of assisting at the consecration of the church of St. James, built upon land due to the liberality of the Honorable Denis Benjamin Viger, and where the Bishop of Telmesse intended to fix his episcopal see, when the district of Montreal would be erected into a separate diocese.

In 1823, Mgr. MacDonell went to England for the purpose of inducing the ministry not to offer any obstacles to the erection of Upper Canada into a Bishopric. During his absence, the ecclesiastical government of the whole province fell upon Mgr. Plessis, and added immensely to his ordinary labor. Fortunately, he found upon the limits of the upper province, a respectable ecclesiastic, M. Manseau, who was named grand vicar and charged with the administration of the episcopal district confided to Mgr. MacDonell. The wisdom and prudence of the administrator deserved sincere thanks on the part of the Bishop of Quebec.

Age and infirmities, however, began now to make their impression upon a constitution naturally strong and robust, but which never had been taken care of ; anxieties, watchings and assiduous labor, had by degrees undermined it. For some years, Mgr. Plessis seemed to be preparing himself for the approach of death, even when it might be reasonably supposed to be far in the future. He often spoke of it to his friends, and reminded them that that event could not be long delayed.

M. André Doucet who had been curé of Quebec and grand vicar, had acquired a great share in the affections of his bishop. He was an amiable man, a brilliant orator, and loved by all who knew him ; but he was deficient in one necessary quality to a curé, above all to such a curé as that of the city of Quebec. His affairs fell into a confusion from which he found himself quite unequal to the task of extricating them. This defect so discouraged him, that he resigned his cure in 1814, and finally left the diocese. His friends regretted his departure sincerely, but he felt the necessity of retiring, and passed a year at La Trappe

d'Aigues-Belle, in Savoy, and afterwards devoted himself to some missions, which his bishop had much at heart. He had been many years curé of Argyle, in Nova Scotia, when he decided upon requesting permission to reenter his old diocese. In the bishop's reply, that thought of death, which as we have said, was constantly before his eyes, presents itself.

"As to me, my dear child, I shall see you with much pleasure, you know my affection for you, and it will not belie itself. You are about forty-one years of age. I have completed sixty, see how the years pass. I will not say to you like Horace: "*Eheu! fugaces, Posthume, Posthume, labuntur anni!*" but more christianly and after our divine Saviour: *Ambulate dùm lucem habetis; venit nox in quâ nemo potest operari.*"

"The longest life is that, which like yours and mine, has been chequered by a great number of events and changes of place, but what is all that in comparison with the eternity towards which we are running."*

He had been subject for some years to inflammatory rheumatism, which gave him little repose, and a wound in his leg, at this period, became so enlarged as to give his friends deep anxiety. His sufferings were so great, that it required extraordinary courage to continue at the same time his weighty occupations. He was nevertheless, compelled at certain violent periods of his sickness, to lay aside all business, retire to the General Hospital and place himself under the care of his doctor.

At the close of 1825 a serious fit of his sickness obliged him to return to the Hospital; and it was from thence that he wrote to the Bishop of Telmeuse on the 29th November: "This is the first letter I have written after six days, and I have been obliged to resume it many times."

Contrary to the advice of his doctor, he would persist in busying himself with the affairs of his diocese. One

* Letter to M. Doncet, 12 April 1823.

of his last thoughts was for Rome. The magnificent basilica of St. Paul having been destroyed by fire, the Sovereign Pontiff called upon the zeal of all the faithful of the Universe to contribute to its reestablishment.

The Bishop of Quebec, who had a particular devotion to St. Paul, and who had visited with veneration the church where the apostle of nations is honored, welcomed the demand of the Holy Father with earnestness, and published a magnificent letter recommending a collection.

In writing to the Bishop of Telmesse of the appeal that he had made to the charity of his diocesans, he sent a few words about himself.

"It is not necessary to tell you, that I have been so unwell as to alarm our friends here, who have sent for Monseigneur the coadjutor, I am a little better without being well."

On the 4th of December he had heard mass in one of the Halls of the Hospital, and had received the Holy Communion; at about two in the afternoon, he conversed with his doctor and was speaking in praise of M. Lefrançois, curé of St. Augustin, who by his vigilance had succeeded in banishing luxury from his parish, when he suddenly lost his speech: he sunk down; the doctor gave the alarm; several of the attendants ran eagerly to his assistance, but he was already dead.

The news of his death spread instantly through all parts of the city of Quebec, and was received with the most profound grief.

That death seemed to produce a void which nothing could fill. The Bishop of Saldes was above all, overwhelmed with the prospect of the succession to the vacancy.

"You cannot think in what embarrassment we find ourselves here," he wrote to Mgr. Poynter: "and what can I do, at my age of seventy-three for the expedition of business, which is ever multiplying more and more?"

The first stupor overcome, they thought of rendering to the illustrious deceased the honors which were so justly his due. He had often said that he felt no repugnance at the idea of his body being opened after his death. Messrs. Fargues, Painchaud and Parant were the surgeons selected for that task, which they performed in presence of many members of the clergy. His heart was taken out to be deposited at the church of St. Roch.

On the 6th, his body was transferred to the church of the Hotel-Dieu, accompanied by a guard of honor, by the clergy of the city and the neighboring parishes, and by an immense crowd of the faithful.

The next day it was transferred from the Hotel-Dieu to the cathedral, in the midst of an eager crowd of citizens of all classes, and of all denominations. Immediately after the coffin, walked the Governor General, Lord Dalhousie, the superior Officers of the garrison, the Members of the Executive and Legislative Councils, and the Judges of the Court of King's Bench. By virtue of a general order, all the troops of the garrison composed of the 71st and 79th regiments, and of a detachment of royal artillery, assisted under arms and fired minute guns; the stores and shops were closed; nothing was neglected to prove the general mourning.

On the arrival of the funeral at the Cathedral, the crowd became so great, that the spacious building could only contain a part of the assistants. Divine Service was chanted by Mgr. Panet, overcome still more by grief than years. The funeral oration was pronounced by M. Demers, Superior of the Seminary, who had been named Vicar General in the preceding month of June; he performed his task with an eloquence which responded to the yearnings of all hearts.

It was nearly one o'clock when the remains of the venerated prelate, regretted so sincerely by his flock, were deposited in a brick vault, on the left side of the altar, under that part of the sanctuary which he had indicated himself; where he had been accustomed to

offer up his thanksgivings and to pass a considerable time in prayer after mass.

At two o'clock of the same day, his heart, enclosed in a cylindrical Vase of Crystal, was borne solemnly from the General Hospital to the Church of Saint Roch, a numerous Clergy preceded the litter upon which the precious vase was placed. The Trustees performed the office of bearers, and the Citizens of the Suburb of Saint Roch followed the procession in crowds.

After a solemn service sung by Mgr. Panet, the Crystal vase which contained the heart, was enclosed in a leaden box and placed in an excavation built in the wall of the Chapel of Saint Roch. The spot is covered by a metal plate, engraved with the name of the deceased.

On the 21st December following, Mgr. Panet announced to Dr. Poynter, the loss that Canada had experienced.

"It is with grief that I announce to your Grace, the sudden and unexpected death of my predecessor, which we all deplore. It took place on the 4th inst., at the moment when his medical attendant had just told him that he found him better. It is an irreparable loss to the diocese. Everybody here, Protestants as well as Catholics, have been much afflicted by it.

Mgr. Poynter replied in terms which deserve to be produced here :

"I unite sincerely in the sentiments of your lordship, on the occasion of the sorrowful event which has deprived the diocese of Quebec of a prelate so distinguished—the faithful of an affectionate father and a faithful friend—the clergy of its model and support—and I will do myself the honor to add, which has taken away from you and me, a dear friend."*

Similar praises came from sources the most venerated. Mr. Robert Gradwell, grand vicar and agent of Mgr. Plessis at Rome, acquainted Mgr. Panet with

* Letter of Mgr. Poynter, 27th January, 1826.

the deep impression that had been made upon the sovereign pontiff, and upon the cardinals who knew Mgr. Plessis, when they heard of his death.

"A few days after my last letter to Mgr. Plessis, I had the grief to learn that the church had lost that great prelate. The Pope and the members of the propaganda have been profoundly afflicted at the news."

"Very dear Lord," wrote Cardinal Somaglia, prefect of that venerable congregation, "our souls have been struck with the most profound grief in learning the lamentable news of the death of the illustrious bishop, Jos. Oct. Plessis."

The civil authorities joined in these testimonies of universal regret. Lord Dalhousie consigned them in a letter to Mgr. Panet.

"Taking a sincere part in the general grief, I will permit myself to offer you my condolences upon the afflicting loss, that we have experienced by the death of Mgr. Plessis, Roman Catholic Bishop of the diocese of Quebec. The people of this province of all classes of society have rendered justice to his virtues and his character; the church has lost a venerable prelate; the people a firm and indefatigable guardian of its spiritual interests. The King a loyal and faithful subject. As the representative of His Majesty in this place, I am particularly happy to acknowledge his continual attention and kind acts to me personally; they have produced that harmony, which existed in all our relations, and you may judge that I experience a sincere grief, together with the whole country, in this sad circumstance."

The same favourable judgment of Mgr. Plessis was entertained by all those who had the advantage of knowing him.

Among the Pontiffs who have governed the church of Canada, he held with Mgr. de Laval the first rank for zeal, for that spirit of order, firmness in maintaining discipline, courage to maintain the interests of the church against the great and powerful, and disinterestedness the most complete. A model to his

flock by his virtues, he enlightened them by his science, guided them by his wisdom and protected them by his prudence. The canadian people will therefore ever preserve a most profound respect, a sincere gratitude and an unalterable esteem for their venerable Bishop, the illustrious Joseph Octave Plessis.





